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WORLD SOCCER

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May 1999

I'LL NAIL my colours to the mast right now. To borrow a phrase from Kevin Keegan, I will love it, love it, if Kyiv Dynamo win the Champions League next month. It's not that I've got anything against any of the other teams left in the competition. It's just that, in an era when the sponsor is king, Kyiv represent everything that we hold dear about the European Cup. Unlike Bayern Munich and Manchester United, they actually won their domestic championship last year. Unlike Juventus, who squeezed through to the quarter-finals having won just one match, Kyiv have entertained us with some exhilarating football. And yet, if Media Partners had got their way, Kyiv would not have even been allowed to compete in future Champions Leagues. In Andrii Shevchenko, Kyiv have a player who seems destined for greatness. We profile the Dynamo striker on page 14 as part of our extensive European Cup semi-finals preview. Also this month, we open the voting to select the greatest players of the century. Please take your time in deciding (you have until October), but please take the trouble to vote. ***Gavin Hamilton, Editor (gavin_hamilton@ipc.co.uk)***

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COMMENTARY

'I am questioning what has become a cliché – that "Africa deserves the World Cup"'

Soccer City, Johannesburg...a possible venue for the 2006 World Cup Final

Africa, right or wrong

DANNY JORDAAN says it, Issa Hayatou says it, Sepp Blatter says it, Pele says it. But is it really true?

What I am questioning is what has become a football diplomacy cliché – that 'Africa deserves the World Cup'.

Deserves? Can anyone explain?

I can happily accept that after 2002 Africa will be the only mainstream confederation (sorry, Oceania!) that will never have played host to the greatest event boasted by the greatest of sports and that, therefore, 2006 can logically be considered to offer Africa its due turn.

I can happily accept that Africa has offered the world (mostly Europe) hundreds of outstanding footballers who contribute richly to the high standards on offer at club level.

I can happily understand why African football needs as much encouragement as possible to continue to enthuse its young people and offer them more and better facilities so that they can learn the game and improve techniques and skills.

I have no doubt that it would help remove the chip on the shoulder which African football carries about its place in the world game.

Many African officials feel they are considered second-class citizens within the international football community; that's why they have gathered so much satisfaction and mischievous enjoyment from playing a key role in the presidential elections of, first, Joao Havelange back in 1974 and, most recently, Blatter last year.

All these reasons and many more speak up for Africa's desire to host the World Cup finals. Whether South Africa, for all its wealth, power and technological and infrastructural potential, is the right nation to be 'first' for Africa is another matter; but that is up to the Africans to resolve among themselves.

The word 'deserve' carries an implication of emotional pressure. But Africa does not need to go down that path. Indeed, that route serves only to hide the proper reasons – some set out above – why the World Cup should go to that great continent some day sooner or later.

So, please, if a Pele or Blatter believes that Africa is the right venue, then give us the reasons, not rhetorical hot air...or even Hayatou and his confederation executive may start to suspect that questions of praise and pragmatism may invoke painfully conflicting answers.

Racing rescued

ARGENTINA'S government has come up with a novel solution to rescue former World Club champions Racing Club from bankruptcy – the Sports Ministry has put a Bill through congress which declares the club a part of Argentina's "national heritage".

What a contrast with Celtic, with whom Racing once shared one of the ugliest of football battles. The Scottish champions, after all, can dream of the riches to come from pay-per-view and entry into expanded European leagues.

But Racing, whose explosive mixture of skill and cynicism shocked even the late Jock Stein, are bankrupt. They cannot pay their players and their stadium – named after dictator Juan Domingo Peron – is up for sale.

New readers may be unaware of how Celtic, newly-crowned champions of Europe back in 1967, came across Racing, champions of South America, for the first and only time in the two-leg World Club Cup that autumn.

Celtic won 1-0 at Parkhead but lost the return 2-1 in Buenos Aires after goalkeeper Ronnie Simpson was knocked unconscious by a missile thrown from the crowd during the warm-up.

A play-off was staged in nearby Montevideo, Uruguay, three days later. Racing won 1-0 but so inflammatory was the feeling between the teams that no fewer than six players – two from Racing, four from Celtic – were sent off by Paraguayan referee Rodolfo Osorio. Celtic's Bertie Auld refused to leave the pitch, so Osorio, rather than risk another confrontation, blew the final whistle instead.

Since then, Racing have committed the sin of living on past glories, according to Juan Carlos Cardenas, the centre-forward who scored the winning goals against Celtic in both Buenos Aires and Montevideo.

He said: "When we brought home the World Club Cup in 1967 it was the greatest moment in Racing's history. Since then, we have had 32 years living in the past with presidents who talked a lot but did very little."

A problem for more clubs than Racing, of course.

Calendar proposal...Platini and Blatter

Unification or bust

FIFA has published its directive on how to co-ordinate the international calendar...and it does NOT depend on international events at all.

Instead, president Blatter – loyally seconded by counsellor Michel Platini – is proposing that every country falls into line with a league season that would start in February and end in November. They believe that 'international breaks' for the finals of World Cups and events such as the European Championship, African Nations Cup etc can then be fixed at a midway point in June and July. FIFA is confident players will like the idea because it guarantees them a holiday in mid-winter over the Christmas and New Year period.

Not surprisingly, top clubs in western Europe are furious. Gerd Niebaum, president of Borussia Dortmund, spoke for many when he said: "It's a ridiculous idea. FIFA has no business meddling in the running of national domestic competitions."

German clubs, however, have always been among the quickest to complain when their African, South American and Asian players desert the Bundesliga because of national team calls.

Obviously, someone somewhere is going to be put out by whatever it takes to unify the calendar. Or was that point too obvious?

Relief all round

PELE is back onside with World Cup sponsor MasterCard. But it was a close thing. Pele has been lending – sorry, selling – his name to the credit card corporation since the 1994 finals in the United States.

It was a smart move by MasterCard then, because Pele was one of the few soccer players known in small-town USA, and the partnership worked equally well in France last year where Brazilian football is worshipped more than in perhaps any other country.

But business is business and at one stage after France 98 it was far from certain that either partner would carry on. The cost of sponsoring a World Cup has leaped from £12million to £25million – and FIFA and marketing partner ISL had been pressuring potential clients to confirm for the NEXT TWO World Cups.

That would have meant MasterCard, for example, committing itself to spending £50million over the next six years on soccer even before it started adding up the cost of the promotional programmes to capitalise on those sponsor rights. While MasterCard thought about it, so the Pele contract expired.

It was a race against time. Would MasterCard renew? If they did, would Pele still be available? In the end, the answer was Yes on both counts.

"I am very happy to remain a part of the MasterCard family," said Pele. One suspects that he is not half as happy, or relieved rather, as the MasterCard bosses are to have kept him on board.

A spanner in the Belgian works

BELGIUM'S failure to reach the second round of the World Cup finals was a pointed indictment of the quality of the domestic game.

Even more significant may be the fact that Belgian clubs have become the favoured takeover targets for richer neighbours.

Manchester United are negotiating – at the least – a player-swap deal with Antwerp, Dutch champions Ajax are buying a minority stake in soon-to-be-merged Germinal Beerschot of Antwerp, while Feyenoord are tying up a deal with RWD Molenbeek of Brussels.

While UEFA worries about multi-ownership by financial corporations, has it considered what a spanner cross-border ownership may throw in the works?

Berti's not so buoyant

FORMER Germany coach Berti Vogts has gone back to his old club Borussia Monchengladbach as a director – and does not like what he has found.

Vogts was a key defender when Borussia were a dominant force in the 1970s. Now he sees his old favourites bottom of the table.

On joining the board Vogts warned that he would consider legal action against anyone who suggested Borussia were doomed. After a few weeks in his new post, however, even Vogts admitted: "Really, it will take a remarkable effort if we are to stay up."

Oh, what a tangled web

The price of success...United could suffer from fixture suffocation

FIXTURE chaos beyond any club's worst nightmare will threaten Manchester United next season if they win the Champions League.

The price of victory may be a weighty one after FIFA's decision to insert the long-awaited World Club Championship into the middle of the next, already overcrowded, season.

FIFA's executive decided in Zurich not only to stage a world club tournament between January 5 and 14 but, possibly, to award host rights to Brazil. United, should they win the Champions League, would find participation virtually impossible to refuse. Yet that would demand the squad's absence for three weeks once travel and acclimatisation time had been included. That could produce fixture confusion not only for United but for many other English clubs because their absence could cover two rounds of the FA Cup.

Lennart Johansson, the UEFA president who is also a FIFA vice-president, left no doubt as to his concern about the new world club cup. He said: "We are not happy about it because of the time of the year, but we decided to be loyal to the other worldwide confederations and give it a go."

Johansson was thus conceding that, in a vote by FIFA's all-powerful executive, he would be overwhelmed by enthusiasm for the project from the rest of the world.

Guariniello grinds on

THE DOPING inquiry being led by Turin prosecutor Raffaelle Guariniello is rumbling on – much to the irritation of Juventus players.

Will it ever get anywhere? You start to wonder when the prosecutor will be investigating himself for possible misuse of public funds.

Guariniello began his probe last summer after the Roma coach, Zdenek Zeman, queried the muscle-bound intensity of several Juve players – including Alex Del Piero and former hero Gianluca Vialli (now, of course, Chelsea player-manager). Guariniello has interrogated dozens of top-name players, coaches and officials but it's only Juve men – including French World Cup-winning heroes Zinedine Zidane and Didier Deschamps – who have been called back for follow-up interviews.

And what has Guariniello to show for his time and effort? Only one arrest warning has been issued – against the owner of a pharmaceuticals company, which allegedly sold the muscle-building agent creatine without a licence.

Self-indulgent or what?

NIKE ALPHA PROJECT

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Bang.

Libero

The top 100...

...your chance to vote on the century's best players

FROM Ademir to Zoff, Andrade to Zidane...there has been considerable reaction to the series of *World Soccer* booklets listing our selection of the 100 Greatest Footballers of All Time.

To be exact, much of the reaction has concerned our non-selections, the players who did not make their way on to the list.

"How can you leave out Jimmy Greaves and Gary Lineker, two of England's top three scorers?" wrote one reader (admittedly a Tottenham fan).

"No Krol, no Haan – what sort of selection is this?" asked an irate Holland supporter (who is likely to be even more irate when he sees the third of the booklets, included with this issue, and finds that there is no Neeskens, either).

"I am amazed to see that Mario Kempes, one of the truly great finishers of the post-war era, whose goals won the 1978 World Cup for Argentina, does not merit a place," was another comment.

So now, as promised in the first of the three booklets, we are giving you the chance to have your say as we set out to find the Readers' Top 100 players of the century. To cast a vote for your selections, enter the players' names in order of preference on the coupon below. If, for example, you think Alex James was the greatest player of the century, enter his name, in capitals please, in the space for No 1. Then do the same with your other top 10 choices. When we receive your completed coupon, we will award 10 points to each No 1 selection, nine points for No 2, and so on.

Then, after all the lists have been examined and votes counted, we will be able to publish the *World Soccer* Top 100 as decided by you.

As a guide to some of the game's great names we have listed our booklet top 100, right, plus an alternative 100. But don't forget that you can vote for any player you like – and there's no need to rush: you have until the end of October to get your entries to us.

We intend to publish the full results of this fascinating exercise in our final issue of the century, on sale in December.

Please help us to make this the most comprehensive soccer survey ever by completing and returning the coupon. Enjoy your decision-making!

My Top 10 in CAPITAL letters, please

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

7 _____

8 _____

9 _____

10 _____

My name _____

My address _____

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Country _____

Send this form (or a photocopy) to:
Top 100, *World Soccer*,
24th Floor, King's Reach Tower,
Stamford Street,
London SE1 9LS.

MAY

Our leading 100

THE top 100 players nominated by *World Soccer* and published in the three booklets were as follows:

Ademir
Jose Leandro Andrade
Roberto Baggio
Gordon Banks
Franco Baresi
Franz Beckenbauer
George Best
Franz 'Bimbo' Binder
Danny Blanchflower
Oleg Blokhin
Jozsef Bozsik
Antonio Carbajal
John Charles
Bobby Charlton
Hector Chumpitaz
Mario Coluna
Gianpiero Combi
Johan Cruyff
Teofilo Cubillas
Zoltan Czibor
Kenny Dalglish
Dixie Dean
Alfredo Di Stefano
Didi
Domingos Da Guia
Duncan Edwards
Arsenio Erico
Eusebio
Giacinto Facchetti
Bernabe Ferreyra
Tom Finney
Just Fontaine
Enzo Francescoli
Arthur Friedenreich
Garrincha
Francisco Gento
Gerson
Gilmar
Gyula Grosics
Ruud Gullit
Nandor Hidegkuti
Jairzinho
Alex James
Sandor Kocsis
Kalman Konrad
Raymond Kopa
Ladislav Kubala
Angel Labruna
Denis Law
Tommy Lawton
Leonidas Da Silva
Nils Liedholm
Paolo Maldini
Diego Maradona
Silvio Marzolini
Josef Masopust
Lothar Matthaus
Stanley Matthews
Sandro Mazzola
Valentino Mazzola
Giuseppe Meazza
Roger Milla
Luisito Monti
Bobby Moore
Juan Manuel Moreno
Gerd Muller
Jose Nasazzi
Gunnar Nordahl
Ernst Ocwirk
Wolfgang Overath
Daniel Passarella
Adolfo Pedernera
Pele
Silvio Piola
Pirri
Frantisek Planicka
Michel Platini
Ferenc Puskas
Roberto Rivelino
Gianni Rivera
Karl-Heinz Rummenigge
Hugo Sanchez
Leonel Sanchez
Jose Santamaria
Djalma Santos
Nilton Santos
Gyorgy Sarosi
Juan Schiaffino
Uwe Seeler
Matthias Sindelar
Omar Enrique Sivori
Marco Van Basten
Paul Van Himst
Obdulio Varela
Fritz Walter
Lev Yashin
Ricardo Zamora
Zico
Zinedine Zidane
Dino Zoff

Not forgetting...

TO HELP – or hinder – you in your labours, here is a list of another 100 players who did not make our selection but could make yours.

Florian Albert	Sepp Maier
Jose Altafini	Majid Abdullah
Cliff Bastin	Billy Meredith
Gabriel Batistuta	Johan Neeskens
Jim Baxter	Oldrich Nejedly
Bebeto	Gunter Netzer
Igor Belanov	Thomas N'Kono
Dennis Bergkamp	Jean-Pierre Papin
Zvonimir Boban	Toni Polster
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Liam Brady	Hector Rial
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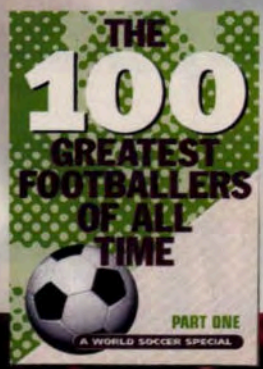
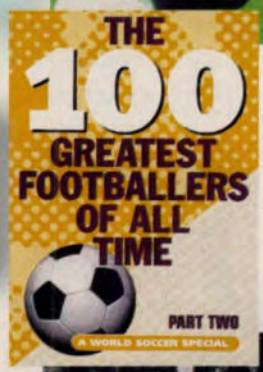
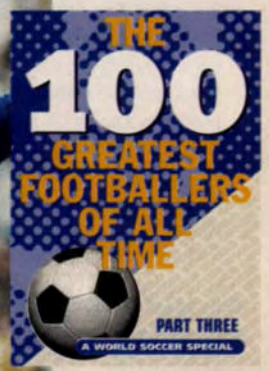
Emilio Butragueno	Luigi Riva
Jorge Campos	Bryan Robson
Claudio Caniggia	Pedro Rocha
Eric Cantona	Romario
Careca	Ronaldo
Carlos Alberto Torres	Paolo Rossi
Cha Bum-kun	Ian Rush
Jose Luis Chilavert	Marcelo Salas
Ray Clemence	Peter Schmeichel
Clodoaldo	Karl-Heinz Schnellinger
Dragan Dzajic	Bernd Schuster
Preben Elkjaer	Gaetano Scirea
Falcao	Alan Shearer
Paul Gascoigne	Peter Shilton
Johnny Giles	Socrates
David Ginola	Luis del Sol
Jimmy Greaves	Graeme Souness
Arie Haan	Hristo Stoichkov
Gheorghe Hagi	Luis Suarez
Helmut Haller	Davor Suker
Kurt Hamrin	Marco Tardelli
Ernst Happel	Jean Tigana
Hossam Hassan	Tostao
Rene Higuita	Bert Trautmann
Uli Hoeness	Vava
Geoff Hurst	Gianluca Vialli
Victor Ikpeba	Berti Vogts
Pat Jennings	Rudi Voller
Kevin Keegan	George Weah
Mario Kempes	John White
Jurgen Klinsmann	Ray Wilson
Jurgen Kohler	Billy Wright
Bora Kostic	Tony Yeboah
Ruud Krol	Rashidi Yekini
Lefter Kuculandonyadis	Branco Zebec
Grzegorz Lato	Andoni Zubizarreta
Michael Laudrup	
Gary Lineker	
Dave Mackay	
Rabah Madjer	







His master's voice

Pele talks exclusively to Keir Radnedge

WORLD SOCCER: What is your opinion of Ronaldo?

PELE: He has not been at his best this season, partially because of what happened to him at the World Cup Final in France.

Can he ever be as good as he looked likely to be?

I was injured during the 1966 World Cup finals in England and I came back and played another 10 years or more – and won a World Cup. There is no reason why Ronaldo might not do the same. The problem, however, is not so much physical but psychological. What happened at the World Cup was different to a normal injury. He went into the World Cup as the greatest player in the world, the one who could score the most goals, the most beautiful goals. But he didn't have the luck he needed. It was a bad mistake by coach Zagallo to play Ronaldo right from the start of the World Cup Final and for all the 90 minutes. To have played him for 20 or 25 minutes, or maybe in the second half, that would have been fine. But he was not prepared to play a full 90 minutes and now he has to carry the weight of the psychological damage. Certainly he has had injuries. But the psychological aspect of his game will be much harder to rectify than the physical.

As for whether he will ever be the same player he was, say, three years ago – well, nowadays everyone knows about him. He cannot surprise people any more in the same way. That's a problem for him, too.

Will Romario and Roberto Carlos ever play for Brazil again?

I don't see any problem over Roberto Carlos. He's a fine player, very experienced. The coach, Wanderley Luxemburgo, has several other young players whom he has wanted to experiment with since the World Cup so that's why Roberto Carlos hasn't played. But there are no doubts about his ability. Romario is another matter. He will be in his mid-30s by the time the next World Cup comes around, and probably too old.

Can Kevin Keegan be a successful part-time manager of England?

I know Keegan, and his personality, and I understand why this has proved so controversial. The answer will be in the results: if England, under Keegan, win the next World Cup then nobody can argue with the decision. It would be more complicated in Brazil. For example, Luxemburgo was part-time through the second half of last year but we were only playing friendlies and he had to complete his contract with Corinthians. Now he is full-time national coach. In England, the way the game is run is so professional that it probably is possible to be part-time national coach and hold down a club job. In Brazil, we have a lot to learn from England.

How are your relations with FIFA?

My relationship with FIFA has always been very good, both under Joao Havelange and now under Sepp Blatter. Of course, my relationship with Havelange's son-in-law [Ricardo Teixeira, president of the Brazilian federation] was different, and I want to make that very clear! Now, under Mr Blatter, for the the first time FIFA has a committee which brings together players, coaches, journalists so that we can have open, democratic discussions about the state of the game and its future. Under Blatter, FIFA is heading in the correct, more professional, direction.

Should the World Cup be staged every two years?

For one thing this cannot be considered until after 2006, which is still some way off. My opinion is that it would be a little difficult to stage a World Cup every two years. It's difficult enough to stage as it is, every four years. Nothing can be sorted, certainly, until the presidents of the confederations have got together to create a streamlined international calendar.

Who will host the World Cup in 2006?

That's a big fight between South Africa, England, Germany, Brazil and Argentina. One day I want to see the World Cup in Africa…but I don't have a vote in the matter.

Will you be involved in the 2002 World Cup?

Certainly, I'm looking forward to it. MasterCard will be one of the main World Cup sponsors with FIFA for another four years and I will be working with them, all the way through to the Final in Yokohama. I can't wait.

When will the 'Pele Law' take effect in Brazilian football?

We've been having a lot of discussion about that. In Brazil it's very hard to try to change the mentality of the presidents of the confederations and the clubs. When I was Sports Minister we worked for nearly four years to get a new law through which would help us to make the game more professional. In Rio de Janeiro, for example, all the clubs have financial problems so the only way they can survive is by becoming proper businesses.

It will take about one more year before the Pele Law takes effect. But it's essential. Look at Flamengo. They are the biggest club in Brazil, with the greatest history and the most fans, yet they are supposed to be on the brink of bankruptcy. They have to move with the times – the sooner the better.

OPINION

Show more respect!

Mike Plastow in Tokyo on the difference in attitudes between East and West

AFTER ALL the talk about taking the World Cup to the world and ending the alternate hosting by Europe and the Americas, the remarkable outcome is that Asia is now threatening to boycott its own World Cup.

In all probability some compromise will be found and the boycott will not happen. But even if it does not go ahead, the new crisis underscores the lack of understanding that has bedevilled plans for the 2002 World Cup for the past half decade – in Europe, does anyone even realise there is a crisis? – and shows that nothing fundamental has been learned.

In short, it is high time that more respect was shown to the less-developed footballing nations.

This whole situation is especially regrettable because the idea of taking the World Cup to the world has a long and noble history, representing as it does the genuine eagerness of many influential people in Europe, South America and elsewhere to promote the game. So how could they keep on getting it so wrong?

In the case of the threatened boycott, the issues are mostly clear. Ever since the 1980s, high-ranking FIFA officials have talked of giving the first World Cup of the new century to Asia. This was to be the Asian World Cup, and the Asians believed it. When Sepp Blatter, now FIFA president, visited Hong Kong as recently as May last year, he was reported as saying that Asia would receive five places in 2002, and maybe the chance of one more. Everyone in Asia nodded. Of course, six would be nice...

Now, Asia has been told it can have only the four places it had in France last year; this for a federation with nearly a quarter of all FIFA members.

With Japan and South Korea qualifying automatically as hosts, it actually looks harder for all the other Asian countries to get through to the finals since they must now compete for only two berths.

The argument against giving Asia extra places is incomprehensible from an Asian perspective. Whatever the political background, on the surface it rests on the quality of football played; Asian countries have an abysmal record at the World Cup.

However, the distribution of places is based on compromises made with specific geographical regions that cannot be justified by playing strength alone. If places were awarded on playing strength, Europe might win 10 more places than it has already and Asia, sad to say, could end up with none.

The whole point, however, is that this is the *World* Cup. Just like the Olympic Games, it is about participation as well as winning, and the expanded 32-team format leaves leeway for giving this Asian World Cup its special due.

So we end up with mutual incomprehension. The great powers of football feel that they are doing Asia a favour simply by allowing the World Cup to be staged on such foreign soil. They also feel that Asia is over-represented already. The Asians feel slighted by this 'little brother' treatment and chagrined at having believed too much.

If this were an isolated dispute, it would not be important. The tragedy, however, is that it is all too common. The same shift from idealistic targets to realpolitik also occurred in the co-hosting saga, with the same smug pride and condescending sense of doing Asians favours – among Europeans, especially – contrasting with the same hurt pride on the Asian side as they watched things being given with one hand and taken with the other.

In Japan, people remember that in 1970, two years after Japan won the bronze at the Mexico Olympics, FIFA president Sir Stanley Rous suggested that Japan should bid for the 1986 World Cup. At the time, Japan did not have a professional league, the stadia and all the rest, and did not feel able to do it.

By 1986, however, Japan had just come out of an extended period of spectacular economic growth and since it had the facilities by then, its football was ready for a further push. That old suggestion of 1970 was recalled and FIFA, too, proved keen. The holding of the first World Cup of the new century in Asia promised to be a powerful symbol for further promotion of the game.

Fans in France...Korean supporters at last year's World Cup

Then it all began to unravel. South Korea, in particular, had not only the better World Cup record but also the older professional league and wanted to host the World Cup for the sake of football at home, despite the huge challenge to its much smaller economy. There also was the old rivalry with Japan, their former colonial ruler.

To have two bidders rather than one was not a bad thing. One would have thought, however, that people might have spotted that Japan and South Korea were not good friends. In South Korea, at the time of the vote, it was even illegal to sing Japanese songs or screen Japanese movies. As for Japan, only last year did it make its first written apology to Korea for suffering caused in the colonial period.

That sort of thing, it seems, did not unduly worry FIFA. For their own political reasons they blithely proceeded to impose co-hosting on Japan and South Korea in a manner unthinkable with regard to, say, England and Germany in 2006. The Asians have a right to ask why, the Japanese especially, because they must now pick up many of the pieces, including some hefty Korean bills.

> **"If the World Cup is to be truly global, it cannot be dictated from the heavy-handed Eurocentric angle"**

Incredibly, some people in FIFA thought they were doing Japan a favour when they imposed co-hosting. In view of South Korea's economic crisis, those same officials should now be grateful that Japan did not withdraw, as many in the country thought it should.

Those same FIFA officials will not blame their own blinkered approach for any problems. Their gut reaction will be to blame the easy targets – the Japanese and South Koreans – even though the problems were made by FIFA.

The Asians, of course, may have been naive in believing the idealistic things that they have been told. Asia, moreover, is a complex region and far from being united in its approach to football. There was some support for co-hosting, for example, in Asia itself, and there is plenty of realpolitik in Asia, too.

The bottom line, however, is that if the World Cup is going to be truly global, it cannot be dictated from the heavy-handed Eurocentric perspective. This is true, moreover, to some extent regardless of the quality of the football being played.

The football authorities have been complacent and naive in not recognising the differences of perspective that plainly exist, and in believing that everyone would view the World Cup the way they did. Football is the world game but the world is not united. Cultural sensitivity is required. In the end, football decisions must be seen to be made for the greater good of football in each confederation.

From Asian perspectives, even with the bestowal of FIFA's greatest gift of all, this still is not being seen to be done.

● *Mike Plastow is* World Soccer's *correspondent in Japan.*

Beyond saving

CARLOS ROA, the goalkeeper who has helped Real Mallorca to the Cup-winners Cup semi-finals, has not yet signed a new contract.

Not because of the money on offer – he is worried that the world is going to end in 2001, the year his present contract runs out. "There's no point in having a new one," says Roa.

The 28-year-old Argentinian international belongs to a minority religious group that also opposes working on Saturdays, reports *football365.co.uk*. A little problematic for a professional footballer…

Sent off, 27 minutes late

CREMONESE's Mattia Collauto was replaced by a substitute in the 66th minute of a recent game in Italy's Serie B – and sent off 27 minutes later.

Treviso snatched a 1-1 draw with a disputed late equaliser. At the final whistle, Collauto went back on to remonstrate with the match officials, and got a red card, recorded as being in the third minute of injury time.

Guerrillas zapped

FORMER Mexican international Javier Aguirre, now coach of Pachuca, got together a team of over-35s for a 40-minute match in Mexico City – against the Zapatista National Revolutionary Army.

The guerrillas, who played in masks to avoid recognition, were in the city for a referendum on Indian rights. Aguirre and Co won 5-3.

Transfer trail

ON the move this month: Mikkel BECK (F) Middlesbrough to Derby; Vassilis BORBOKIS (D) Sheffield Utd to Derby County; Colin CALDERWOOD (D) Tottenham to Aston Villa; Kevin CAMPBELL (F) Trabzonspor to Everton (loan); Lee CARSLEY (M) Derby County to Blackburn; Mark DELANEY (D) Cardiff City to Aston Villa; Jorge DELY VALDES (F) Consadole Sapporo to Colorado Rapids; Gerard DOHERTY (G) Derry City to Derby County; Miguel Angel FERRER (F) Real Madrid to Tenerife; Richard GOUGH (D) San Jose Clash to Nottingham Forest; Steve HARKNESS (D) Liverpool to Benfica; Keith O'NEILL (F) Norwich City to Middlesbrough; Goce SEDLOSKI (D) Sheffield Wed to Croatia Zagreb; Steve STONE (M) Nottm Forest to Aston Villa; Graham STUART (M) Sheffield United to Charlton; Zlatko YANKOV (M) Neftohimik to Istanbulspor.

Eccentric views…Carlos Roa

PLAGIARISM CORNER Oi, Harris, NO!

IF ANYBODY sees Harry Harris, the *Mirror*'s Chief Football Writer (sic), reading *World Soccer*, could they please relieve him of his copy? Poor little Harry clearly can't be trusted to read the magazine in a responsible, adult manner.

The day before the first leg of Manchester United's Champions League clash with Internazionale, Harris's 'Big Match Preview' featured quotes from a host of Inter players and the then coach, Mircea Lucescu.

It was impressive stuff. Where did Harris get his quotes from? Did he: A) fly out to Milan and interview the players personally at Appiano Gentile, Inter's training ground, B) pay someone else to get the quotes for him, or C) sit on his backside in London, open the March issue of *World Soccer* and copy our exclusive interviews verbatim, without paying us a penny?

We'll give you a clue: it wasn't A or B.

ESM 11 March 1999

HOW THEY LINE UP

Kahn (7 votes, Bayern); Cocu (3, Barcelona), Stam (7, Man Utd), Mihajlovic (4, Lazio), Lizarazu (3, Bayern); Beckham (7, Man Utd), Effenberg (5, Bayern), Veron (3, Parma), Rivaldo (3, Barcelona); Shevchenko (6, Kyiv Dynamo), Yorke (4, Man Utd).

HOW THEY VOTED

A BOLA (POR)

Kahn (Bayern); Salgado (Celta), Hierro (Real), Stam (Man Utd), Mihajlovic (Lazio); Sergio Conceicao (Lazio), Veron (Parma), Mostovoi (Celta), Rivaldo (Barcelona); Yorke (Man Utd), Claudio Lopez (Valencia).

DON BALON (SPA)

Marchegiani (Lazio); Basler (Bayern), Stam (Man Utd), Mihajlovic (Lazio), Roberto Carlos (Real Madrid); Beckham (Man Utd), Effenberg (Bayern), Zidane (Juventus), Raul (Real Madrid); Shevchenko (Kyiv Dynamo), Yorke (Man Utd).

FOOT (BEL)

Kahn (Bayern); Torricelli (Fiorentina), Mihajlovic (Lazio), Stam (Man Utd), Lizarazu (Bayern); Beckham (Man Utd), Cocu (Barcelona), Veron (Parma), Van Vossen (Feyenoord); Recoba (Venezia), Wiltord (Bordeaux).

FRANCE FOOTBALL

Buffon (Parma); F De Boer (Barcelona) Djukic (Valencia), Stam (Man Utd), Lizarazu (Bayern); Dhorasoo (Lyon), Nedved (Lazio), Jeremies (Bayern); Anelka (Arsenal), Yorke (Man Utd), Claudio Lopez (Valencia).

GAZZETTA (ITA)

Kahn (Bayern); Aguilera (Atletico Madrid), Stam (Man Utd), Matthaus (Bayern), Le Saux (Chelsea); Beckham (Man Utd), Conte (Juventus), Effenberg (Bayern), Cocu (Barcelona); Chiesa (Parma), Shevchenko (Kyiv Dynamo).

KICKER (GER)

Kahn (Bayern); Petrescu (Chelsea), Blanc (Marseille), Nesta (Lazio), Lizarazu (Bayern); Sergio Conceicao (Lazio), Beckham (Man Utd), Effenberg (Bayern), Rivaldo (Barcelona); Shevchenko (Kyiv Dynamo), Jancker (Bayern).

SPORT (SWI)

Kahn (Bayern); Lombardo (Lazio), F De Boer (Barcelona), Thuram (Parma), Kaladze (Kyiv Dynamo); Beckham (Man Utd), Effenberg (Bayern), Claudio Lopez (Valencia), Mihajlovic (Lazio); Shevchenko (Kyiv Dynamo), Crespo (Parma).

VOETBAL INT (HOL)

Kahn (Bayern); Gary Neville (Man Utd), Stam (Man Utd), Blanc (Marseille), Cocu (Barcelona); Beckham (Man Utd), Effenberg (Bayern), Raul (Real Madrid), Ginola (Tottenham); Shevchenko (Kyiv Dynamo), Yorke (Man Utd).

WORLD SOCCER

Kahn (Bayern); Fuser, Thuram (Parma), Stam (Man Utd), Sergi (Barcelona); Beckham (Man Utd), Nedved (Lazio), Veron (Parma), Rivaldo (Barcelona); Crespo (Parma), Shevchenko (Kyiv Dynamo).

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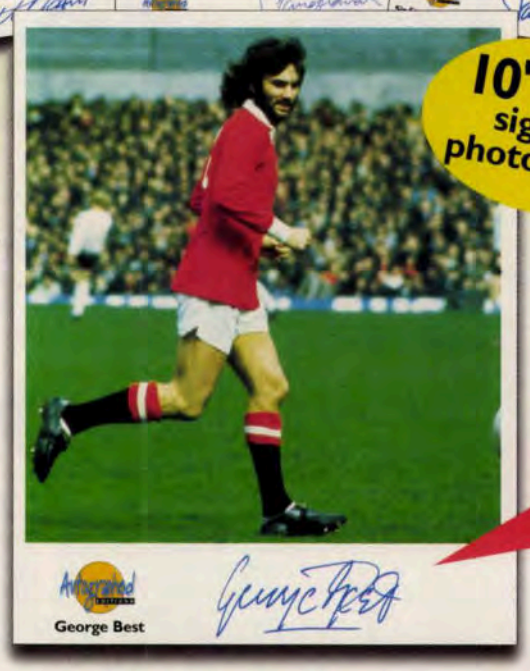

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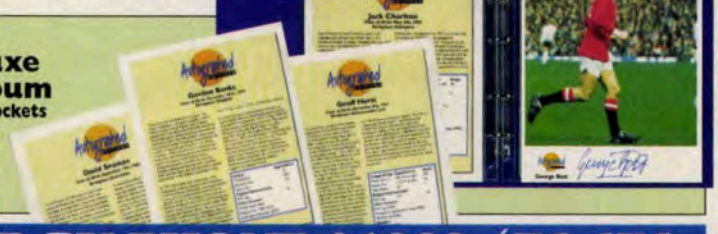

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Lethal weapon

Oleg Zadernovsky reports from Ukraine on the attacking force behind Kyiv Dynamo's success

IN UKRAINE people believe that Andrii Shevchenko is every bit as good as Ronaldo. Such a comparison is a bit flattering – to the Brazilian. While Ronaldo, clearly far from fit, has struggled to cope with the enormous pressure placed on him by Internazionale's commercial and sporting ambitions, Shevchenko has flourished.

Three goals in Kyiv's Champions League quarter-final victory over Real Madrid confirmed the view held by many – that 22-year-old 'Sheva' is the most lethal striker in the world.

Milan certainly think so. A £10million pre-contract deal has been agreed, Shevchenko's personal terms have been sealed and he will arrive in Italy during the summer, ready for a potential blockbuster of a running head-to-head, Milan-versus-Inter confrontation with Ronaldo.

By then, Dynamo could be champions of Europe. And if they triumph in Barcelona on May 19 it will be because they have succeeded in preventing richer clubs in western Europe from taking away too many of their stars.

Dynamo have little opposition in their domestic League, and are able to concentrate on Europe. But in previous seasons, the weather-enforced winter break has acted against them, giving other clubs from other countries the chance to wave cheques in front of the Kyiv management, who have been reluctant to sell but in need of the money.

This time it has been different. Dynamo's European hopes were so high that they were able to persuade nearly all the top men to stay, and only a few thirtysomethings were allowed to depart, earning a 'hello bonus' from their new clubs in recognition of services rendered to Dynamo.

The club will miss Shevchenko enormously. As head coach Valeriy Lobanovskyi puts it: "He has everything a striker needs – good vision, incredible pace and physical strength, plus the most important factor of all, which is a feeling for the goal, where it is in relation to the part of the pitch in which he happens to be. He also likes to work in training and is learning more and more about the game's tactical side." Dynamo president Grygory Surkis has no fears about Shevchenko's future, saying: "He is very mature for such a young man, a strong personality who can overcome every possible problem."

> **"Shevchenko is very mature for such a young man, he can overcome all sorts of problems – Kyiv president Surkis"**

Dynamo players are sure that their soon-to-depart colleague will do well. Fellow striker Serhii Rebrov says: "Playing with Andrii is a pleasure, and I have learned a lot from him since we teamed up in 1995. He will develop into a truly great player."

Defender Yurii Dmytrulin adds: "I can imagine how difficult it must be to oppose him. I'm glad I don't have to."

Midfielder Andrii Husin points out that Shevchenko is never more dangerous than in the closing stages of a match, because he is so well prepared physically. "He is a universal player, constantly moving in attack – and sometimes even back in defence."

Shevchenko came up through the junior ranks at Dynamo and at 13 won his first trophy – which he received from former Liverpool striker Ian Rush, who is one of his heroes along with former Dynamo stars Oleg Blokhin and Leonid Buriyak.

"Dynamo took part in a junior tournament in Wales and won it," he says. "I was named as the best player in the competition, and Mr Rush presented me with a pair of football boots."

Shevchenko made his senior debut in the 1994-95 season, when he played 17 League matches but scored only once. He also appeared in a Champions League group match against Bayern Munich, and scored in a 4-1 defeat.

"I'll remember that goal for the rest of my life," he says. "After a corner-kick the ball came off one of the defenders and I blasted it into the top corner of the net."

In the following season he scored 15 times in 31 appearances, helping the club to the League and Cup double.

In 1996-97 he helped Dynamo to retain the championship with six goals in 20 matches, and was named Player of the Year, despite missing the first three months after injuring a knee. Next season he needed another operation, on a foot injury, but missed only a month and scored 17 goals in 22 appearances as Dynamo did the Double again. And in the first half of the current season he has scored 12 goals in 14 League games, in addition to his European exploits.

"Things are getting more difficult these days," he says, "because I am now being marked more tightly. But that's a good thing for the team, because the other players have that much more freedom. I like taking opponents on. I love going past two or three defenders. But I'm developing as a team player, too.

"I'm very much looking forward to playing in Italy, but that's for the future. At present I'm concentrating as hard as I can on the Champions League."

Shevchenko is not married, does not smoke, and drinks only a little beer or red wine. He lived with his parents (father Nikolay is a retired army officer, mother Lubov an accountant) until 1997, when the club provided him with a three-bedroom apartment in Kyiv. He drives a Mercedes, though he fancies a Ferrari, and his last holiday was in the Seychelles with three team-mates. "I like Japanese food," he says, "but most of all I like everything my mother prepares." He also dresses well but claims that his outfits "are all in good taste, not in a sporty style".

Shevchenko likes old Russian comedy films, and books about history, but football is rarely far from his thoughts and he claims to be able to recall every goal he has scored since turning pro. If he maintains his form, there will be many more going into his memory bank.

Star of Ukraine...Andrii Shevchenko

HOW THEY LINE UP

Kyiv play a fluid 4-4-2 formation with plenty of interchange between defence, midfield and attack. The team is settled: right-back Luzhnyi and centre-back Holovko remain in Kyiv after respective transfers to Benfica and Liverpool did not work out. Dmytrulin and Kossovskyi could return from injury, although new signing Yashkin may come in. Husin could play a marking role on Effenberg.

Bayern's only change from the team that thrashed Kaiserslautern in the quarter-finals is up front where Zickler replaces the injured Elber. Bosnian Salihamidzic could feature as a sub, as could Iranian Ali Daei.

Ties to be played April 7 and 21

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE Semi-finals

New life in the Old Lady

Paddy Agnew in Rome on the Juventus revival under Carlo Ancelotti

ON THE MORNING of Saturday, February 6, French World Cup-winning captain Didier Deschamps turned up for training with Juventus in angry mood. He stormed into the dressing-room at the old Stadio Communale in Turin and made for team coach Marcello Lippi.

"How come I have to find out that I've been dropped from reading the papers?" he demanded. "If I'm dropped, I want to hear it first from you." Lippi replied to the effect that he was the coach, adding that he would take certain decisions as, when and how he saw fit.

By all accounts, there then ensued a bitter exchange between the two men, an exchange so angry that other senior players were forced to intervene so as to avoid fisticuffs.

We know that the above squabble took place because Deschamps himself spilled the beans, reporting the episode one month later and saying only: "A lot of time will have to pass before Lippi and I talk to one another again."

As we reported last month, Lippi stuck to his team selection and dropped Deschamps for the following day's Serie A game at home to Parma. When a dispirited Juventus lost 4-2, after they had opened the scoring, an exasperated Lippi offered his resignation, perhaps in an attempt to assert his authority once and for all, and perhaps believing that the club would ask him to stay.

Lippi, who had been at the helm for four glorious seasons in which Juventus won one Champions Cup and three League titles, got his calculations wrong. The Juventus inner circle (Roberto Bettega, Umberto Agnelli etc) maintained a deafening silence, thus ridding themselves of a coach whose profile had turned from all-winning to all-squabbling in the space of an unsuccessful autumn.

That weekend represented a definitive turning point in the Juventus season. The defeat by Parma climaxed a miserable, three-month, 13-match Serie A run in which the reigning champions won only two games (against lowly Salernitana and Perugia), drew five and lost six. Since then, under new coach Carlo Ancelotti (and with Deschamps back in the side), Juventus have not lost in six Serie A outings, beating Piacenza, Vicenza, Sampdoria and Udinese and drawing with Internazionale and Roma.

More importantly, since then, Juventus have bullishly stomped their way into a Champions League semi-final clash with Manchester United by eliminating Greek side Olympiakos. At the very moment when it might be tempting for neutral observers (plus Man United fans) to conclude that this Juventus are just ripe for the picking, the 'Old Lady' of Italian soccer seems to have found a second wind.

'The players had a burning desire to get back to the top' – Carlo Ancelotti

Clearly, Juventus are now well out of the title contest. Clearly, too, the side looks all the weaker for the long-term injury-enforced absence of Alessandro Del Piero, unlikely to return to competitive action before next August. Further, they often have appeared in difficulty in this season's Champions League, making the quarter-final cut only at the last minute and by the narrowest of margins, then qualifying for their semi-final with Manchester United thanks to a late equaliser away to Olympiakos.

Add up all those considerations and even Juventus fans ought to be getting worried. The above analysis, however, leaves out at least two important considerations: it ignores the Juventus competitive spirit and sheer capacity for battle, and it ignores the team's in-depth experience and track-record as a finalist

in the last three editions of the Champions League.

When I asked Ancelotti if his side had been lucky against Olympiakos, his answer came back loud and clear: "Fortune favours the brave. To be lucky you've got to dare, and we did. Maybe we were a little lucky against Olympiakos but you've got to remember that we conceded an unlucky goal late in the first leg. Over the 180 minutes, we deserved to go through.

"Looking at our run in the Champions League, it's obvious that this is not a champagne Juventus. We've got through thanks to our experience, our character. This team really has a lot of character, especially at the moment." The word 'character' is said with a certain emphasis, too, suggesting that Ancelotti believes it can take Juventus down the Champions League road that bit further.

The coach is quick to deny having waved any magic wand at Juventus, arguing that the team's revival is due, above all, to the players: "When I arrived, the players were understandably a bit down because of the bad results but I also got the sense that they had a burning desire to get back to the top, and to do so quickly. That was the important thing."

Ancelotti believes that Juventus still have two valid chances to make the Champions League again next season. They can win the competition or they can still finish the Serie A season with a flourish and get back into the top four. Such talk might sound like pure bravado, but last season's World Cup hero, Zinedine Zidane, is singing the same song.

He says: "This has been a difficult year for me and the team. To win the World Cup was wonderful but it was difficult to get back into action, difficult especially in my head. Now, however, we're recovering bit by bit and let's just hope that we finish the season well.

Character builder...Carlo Ancelotti

"We've had that bit of luck recently with Ancelotti that we didn't have with Lippi and that has helped, but it is also true that we're not playing as well as we did in recent seasons. When things get tough, however, we know how to play. That's the way Juventus are. The important thing is that we're still there..."

One final observation concerns the Juventus training session I watched at the old Stadio Communale. Before settling down to serious business, Ancelotti stopped for an amiable 10-minute chat with a senior player during which the two clearly seemed to be discussing recent on-field happenings. The player? Didier Deschamps, of course.

HOW THEY LINE UP

Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson can field his strongest side. Berg should keep his place in central defence, although May and Johnsen could come into contention. The more combative Butt may be preferred in midfield to Scholes, who could provide the attacking option which he did so effectively in Milan.

Zidane is expected to shake off a knee injury and return for Juventus alongside the now in-favour Conte, but there are doubts over both first- and second-choice goalkeepers Peruzzi and Rampulla. Di Livio may play at left-back if Ancelotti favours an attacking approach.

Ties to be played April 7 and 21

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26B

'The best Czech in the world'

Kevin Connolly on the dynamic presence in Lazio's star-studded midfield

All-round dynamo...Pavel Nedved

THE HEADLINE on the front of the Czech magazine *Gol* said it all: 'Pavel Nedved, footballing king.'

Nedved, the 26-year-old Lazio midfielder won the 1998 Czech Footballer of the Year award by some distance; recognition of his value to the national team and his consistency in Italy's Serie A.

National coach Jozef Chovanec calls him a "key figure" in the Czech Republic's bid to qualify for the finals of Euro 2000. So there was disquiet in his homeland at reports that he was ready to take up Austrian citizenship, a ploy that would enable Lazio to bring in another player from outside the European Union. Nedved denied it vehemently and refused to co-operate with the Czech media. Relations were still strained when he joined the squad for the Euro 2000 qualifiers against Lithuania and Scotland last month.

Lazio coach Sven Goran Eriksson acknowledges Nedved's importance, too. There are few strikers who can score 11 goals in a Serie A campaign, let alone midfield players. Yet Nedved did last season.

He also netted in both legs of this season's Cup-winners Cup quarter-final rout of Greece's Panionios, form that Eriksson prays will continue on Lazio's Italian championship run-in, and during the final stages of the European competition.

Nedved – skilful, strong and eager to get into scoring positions – became a hot property as the Czech Republic reached the final of Euro 96. He then moved to Lazio and was a star for them last season as they won the Coppa Italia and were beaten finalists in the UEFA Cup. Now the glittering prizes are within reach again... with the Champions League to follow. And fortune has accompanied fame.

Nedved is the highest-paid Czech footballer ever. Mega-wealthy president Sergio Cragnotti has pumped in millions to make Lazio Italy's top team. So when Atletico Madrid allegedly showed interest in Nedved, it was no problem for Lazio to make him a better offer. Now he's contracted until June 30, 2002 – for around £40,000 a week.

Nedved's 1996 move to Lazio caused a storm back home. Not because of anything done by the player or his adviser, the Czech 1976 European Championship winner Zdenek Nehoda, but because of the machinations of his old club, Sparta Prague, and their sponsors.

Nedved had begun his senior career with Plzen. He remained a Plzen-registered player while turning out for Dukla during national service – when Sparta spotted him. Sparta promised Plzen that they would receive a cut of the fee if Nedved was sold on to another club. But when Lazio – coached by a Czech, Zdenek Zeman – came in, Sparta 'transferred' Nedved for peanuts to Slovak club VSS Kosice, who just happened to be sponsored by the same company that backed Sparta.

Plzen demanded restitution, and a Czech FA inquiry eventually ruled that Sparta should pay them £125,000 in compensation.

Meanwhile, Nedved got on with settling in Rome. Ironically, Zeman is now the coach of Lazio's arch-rivals, Roma. But, as Nedved acknowledges, being able to relate to another Czech was definitely a help at the start of his Italian career.

Back home, they never doubted that Nedved would succeed. The great Czech goalkeeper Ivo Viktor, one of Nedved's mentors in 1996, commented: "He developed later than he might have because it took him a while to realise what he could achieve. In his younger days he was a bit lazy. With Dukla he was terrific going forward, but he needed to work on other aspects of his game. Now he is very solid in defence too.

"He has worked very hard to improve. He is a very good two-footed player, though his right is still his best." Then Viktor joked: "If only he could head the ball a bit better, he would be almost perfect."

If there's a problem Nedved has to overcome, it's his temper. He was sent off when playing for the Czechs against the Faroes, and against Inter last October.

Josef Masopust, the majestic wing-half who captained Czechoslovakia to the 1962 World Cup Final, is another big fan. He knows the problem. "Pavel has great power and skill in attack and his movement is exceptional. He is the best Czech player in the world right now."

Lazio supporters will readily agree.

HOW THEY LINE UP

Chelsea player-manager Gianluca Vialli must decide whether to play himself alongside Flo or Zola; he has favoured himself in Europe and Flo in the League. With long-term injuries to Casiraghi and Poyet, Finnish teenager Forssell could feature at some point, but Danish midfielder Goldbaek is cup-tied. Duberry will come in at centre-back if Leboeuf is unfit.

Mallorca are a hard-working team with the best defensive record in this season's Spanish League. Engonga and the Lauren graft hard in midfield, while Paunovic creates for Dani and Biagini. Eccentric goalkeeper Roa has been in impressive form behind the miserly defence.

HOW THEY LINE UP

Georgian Zaza Dzanashiya (a hat-trick in the quarter-final rout of Maccabi Haifa) is the Russians' danger man. He is partnered by Bulykin, but his relationship with playmaker Alexei Smertin has been beset by problems.

Lazio have a wealth of options. Nedved, Almeyda and Sergio Conceicao provide the midfield base for playmaker Mancini to feed Salas and Vieri. De la Pena and Stankovic are other options in midfield. Gottardi and Couto provide defensive cover, while Croatian forward Boksic is back from injury.

Ties to be played on April 8 and 22

Survivor...Antic is one of only two men to have lasted a full season under Jesus Gil

Raddy's return

Gavin Hamilton on the reappointment of Radomir Antic at Atletico Madrid

RADOMIR ANTIC, who is back in Madrid for his second spell in charge of Atletico, is bullish about his team's prospects for their semi-final clash with UEFA Cup favourites Parma.

The Serb, who led Atletico to the Spanish League and Cup double in 1996 before quitting at the end of last season, insists that he wants to start with a clean slate. "To talk about the past is to be scared of the future," he said after agreeing to return as Atletico's coach. "And I'm definitely not scared of the future."

Antic has signed a 15-month contract and insists he can steady a shaky ship. "This is a great day for me," he said. "I'm here to demonstrate, to myself as much as anyone, that I can be a competitive coach of a big club.

"Atletico have put a lot of confidence in me to get us out of this situation. I'm full of optimism."

Antic's re-appointment is the 33rd coaching change made by president Jesus Gil. Only two men have made it through an entire season without incurring the wrath of Atletico's president: Luis Aragones and...Antic.

Since leaving Atletico last summer, Antic has been working as a TV commentator while waiting for the right job offer. He was linked with Liverpool and Tottenham, and spurned an offer to succeed Graeme Souness at Benfica.

But when it became clear that jobs at Real Madrid and Barcelona had passed him by, he accepted the offer from Atletico.

The side Antic inherits have been bedevilled by bad luck all season. Arrigo Sacchi was not a successful appointment, but he was hindered by Christian Vieri's bunk to Rome and long-term injuries to Kiko and Uruguayan Fernando Correa.

Sacchi was sacked last month but Atletico fared no better under caretaker coach Carlos Aguiar: they have collected just one point in the League since Christmas.

But all is not lost. Victory over Roma in the quarter-finals of the UEFA Cup was a timely boost to morale, while Atletico are in the semi-finals of the Spanish Cup.

"The players have obviously been affected by the poor results and something has to change," said Antic.

"But I saw the way they were able to react in a difficult game like the one against Roma. Atletico can compete at a high level in Europe. I'm sure of that."

Antic will never face a sterner test than the two matches against in-form Parma.

HOW THEY LINE UP

Atletico's first-choice back four is clear, with Geli providing cover at full-back. The captain Serena can play either on the left side of midfield or at left-back. With Baraja and Jugovic likely to take the central midfield roles, Juninho is favourite to partner the youthful Jose Mari in attack, though Roberto could be used in this role. Valeron is another option up front.

For in-form Parma, Vanoli is likely to keep his place after Benarrivo missed the quarter-final second leg through suspension and is now carrying an injury. Sartor should step in to replace the suspended Cannavaro in central defence. In midfield, Stanic is often used as a sub to dynamic effect, while up front Balbo or even Asprilla could well feature later on.

HOW THEY LINE UP

For Marseille, Edson can fill in on the left, while the veteran Bravo should act as cover for central midfield, though he started the quarter-final second leg in place of Roy. Ravanelli, struggling with injury of late, may not be fit enough to provide an attacking option up front. Camara is an alternative for the forward line.

In the Bologna side, Paramatti should start, as first-choice left-back Bettarini has been out through injury. The first-choice midfield are all battlers, but one of them could give way to allow the team a more offensive formation. Kolyvanov or Simutenkov would be the man that comes on.

Ties to be played on April 6 and 20

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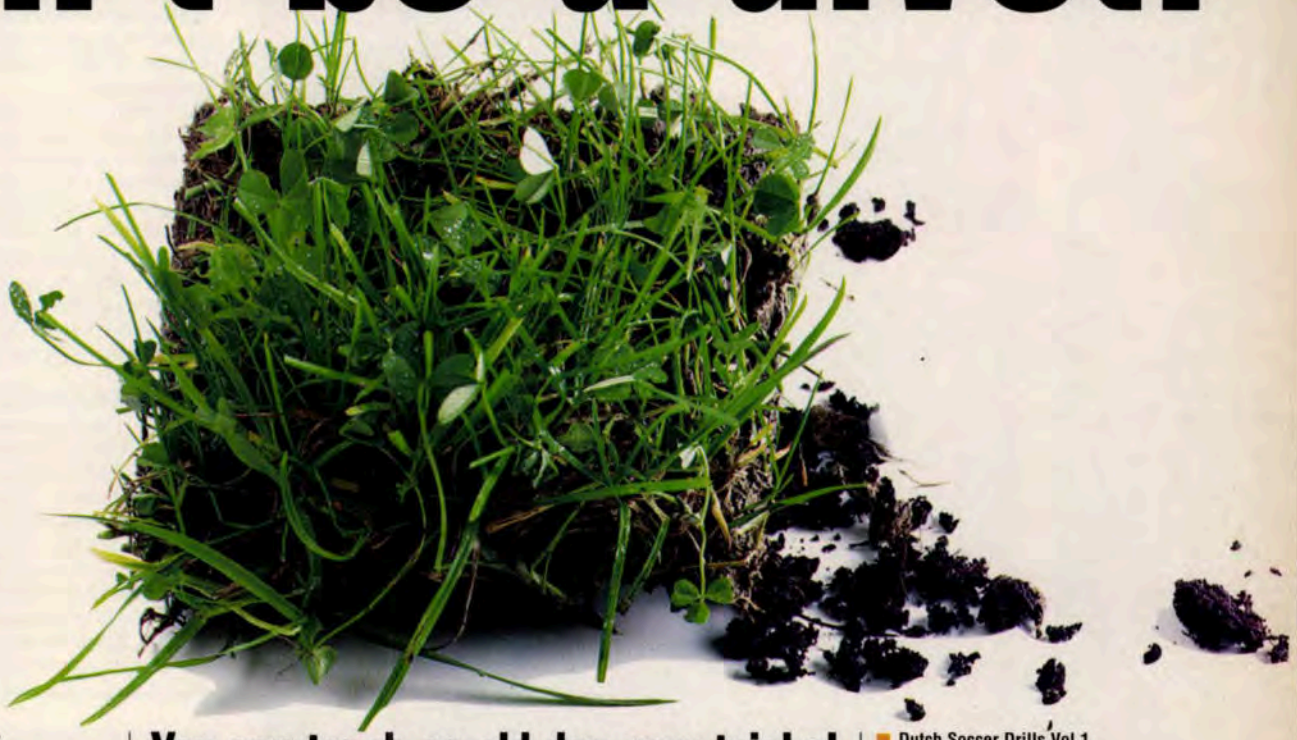

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PROFESSIONAL COACHING EQUIPMENT

Jeff King in Barcelona talks to a player on top of his game

***WORLD SOCCER*: Barcelona have not had the greatest press this season, but with a dozen games to go you're poised to win the Spanish League for the second consecutive year. How do you see it?**

LUIS ENRIQUE: I've always maintained that you can't draw meaningful conclusions until the end of the season. Spanish football is tremendously competitive now – the likes of Valencia, Mallorca and Celta have proved it's not just about Barça and Real Madrid. No club wins on reputation any more, you either play flat out or lose. But you're right, Barça are in a great position; we're top of the League and another three or four wins will make it extremely hard for our opponents to catch us.

So why all the criticism?

It's mainly because everybody was so fired up to do well in the Champions League, especially as it's the club's centenary season and the Final's being held at Camp Nou. Barcelona are one of maybe 10 clubs with realistic hopes of winning the Champions League and obviously we've not lived up to expectations. Getting knocked out at the group stage two years running was tremendously disappointing for our fans. But as a player you can't get obsessed about might-have-beens, you have to shake off the frustration and look ahead.

It can't help the Barça players when the press are constantly attacking their coach.

The first year at Camp Nou is the most complicated for any coach; you have to build a team while getting used to the enormous pressure and expectation at this club. Louis Van Gaal did all that and won the Double. As far as I'm concerned, coaches should be judged on their results. The real problems start when you stop winning things. At the beginning of every

LUIS ENRIQUE – LIFE AND TIMES

Cover up...after scoring for Spain at USA 94

The time of his life

season I'd happily settle for winning the championship and nothing else. At the same time, it's clearly not ideal being in an all-or-nothing situation so early on.

Just before Christmas you were injured and Barcelona lost four games in a row. Despite the arrival of the De Boer brothers, many observers reckon that Barça's resurrection coincided with your return.
That was just coincidence. Barça are lucky enough to have a deep squad, nothing depends on one player. Earlier this season we were missing players all over the park, and Abelardo and Guardiola returned from injury about the same time, too. I've just strained a muscle and that'll keep me out for three or four games, but I'm sure the team won't notice.

You won't deny your goals have made a difference, though?
Well, I love scoring, but Barcelona don't depend on my goals. The bare statistics never reflect the whole team's contribution. It's always the same story: Abelardo wins the ball in a tackle, he knocks it back to Hesp who passes to Guardiola, Kluivert drags defenders out of the way, Figo crosses and I get the ball five yards out and tap it into the back of the net. So half a dozen players are involved but the goalscorer gets all the headlines.

Even so, it must help having a player like Patrick Kluivert alongside you.
Patrick's a tremendously effective player. The whole team benefits from his presence in terms of goalscoring opportunities. He tires defenders out by constantly pulling them out of position and wide. That creates space for players arriving from deep, which is great for people like me. It's always easier to surprise opposing defences if you're being marked by midfielders. Patrick, Figo and Rivaldo are all great crossers of the ball, too.

You had a hard time at Real Madrid in your last couple of seasons there. Now you're playing for a club where the fans idolise you and the local press have put you on a pedestal. That must help your confidence.
I was aware of all the negative comments in my last couple of seasons at Madrid, but I never let external factors influence my form. Naturally, you feel better about yourself if the fans and the press are saying nice things, but as a player what matters is the opinion of your team-mates and coaches. Both Bobby Robson and Louis Van Gaal have shown great faith in me at Barcelona, and I'm lucky that Javier Clemente and now Jose Camacho keep picking me for Spain, too.

But you can't deny that the Barça fans have adopted you as an idol, which is some achievement for a former Madrid player?
Well, I'll always be grateful for the way the Barça fans have received me. On a personal note, moving to Catalonia was the best thing I ever did. I met my wife Elena here, my baby was born in Barcelona, and I'm back living by the sea again. I've got a contract until May 2001 after which Barça have an option to renew it yearly. Basically, I'll continue here until the club decide otherwise. After that I've always said my ambition is to finish my career back at Sporting Gijon – they're my local side and I only played one season there.

So, do you go along with the 'Luis Enrique hates Madrid' argument?
Not at all. People say I celebrate goals against Madrid with special intensity, but it's got nothing to do with revenge. Barça against Real Madrid games are obviously special, whichever side of the fence you're on. I'll never renounce my past at Madrid. I went there as a boy and learned lots of things. It's part of my past and helped make me what I am today. Now I'm totally committed to Barcelona, but when Madrid won the Champions League I was delighted for some of my former team-mates and for the friends I've still got at the club. We spent the whole World Cup joking about which was better, our Double or their European crown!

I'm sure you don't want to go back to playing in defence, though?
I'd be the first to admit my performances as a full-back weren't always up to scratch, but if that's what the team needs I'll do it any time. If you play for a big club sometimes you have to make individual sacrifices. Now I'm scoring goals, though, the coach is more likely to take into account my preferences!

You mentioned Javier Clemente before. You were a vocal supporter of his, but is it fair to say you were sad to see him go but delighted his successor is Jose Camacho?
It was disappointing the way Clemente's reign ended. He wasn't just the coach, he was the players' friend and confidant, too. But we go back to the same thing – coaches are judged on their results and it's obvious Spain should have made more of a mark on the World Cup. After the disappointment in France, the writing was on the wall for Javi. Now we've got a new coach who's starting a really ambitious project of which I hope to be part. Jose Camacho is a strong, dynamic character with a genuine belief in the possibilities of Spanish footballers. He knows our performances on the world stage haven't reflected our true potential, but he's confident he can change that.

May 8, 1970 Luis Enrique Martinez Garcia is born in Asturias, Spain.
September 24, 1989 Makes League debut for local club Sporting Gijon against Malaga. Subsequent injury means it's his only game of the season.
July 1991 Joins Real Madrid after 15 goals in 35 games in one full season at Sporting.
April 18, 1991 Full international debut, against Romania.
August 1992 Plays for Spain's gold medal-winners at the Barcelona Olympics, alongside future Barça team-mates Guardiola, Abelardo and Ferrer.
January 8, 1994 On losing side as Barcelona hammer Real Madrid 5-0 at Camp Nou.
July 10, 1994 A tearful, enraged Luis Enrique, blood-stained shirt et al, becomes one of USA 94's most abiding images, after Italy's Mauro Tassotti breaks his nose in Spain's quarter-final exit.
1994-95 Plays 35 League games as Real break Barça's four-year grip on the Spanish title.
1996 Five seasons after joining Real as a promising striker, he leaves as a confused jack of all trades. In all, he played 157 League games, scoring 14 goals.
September 1, 1996 Scores twice on his Barcelona debut, against Oviedo.
1996-97 Scores 17 goals in a revelatory first season at Camp Nou. Despite competition from Ronaldo, 70 per cent of Barça fans vote him Most Valuable Player (MVP). Bobby Robson's Barcelona win the Spanish Cup and European Cup-winners Cup. He is also a fixture in Javier Clemente's side during the World Cup qualifying campaign, scoring four goals in nine games.
1997-98 Scores 18 goals in 34 games as Barça, under Louis Van Gaal, win their first League title since 1994.
June 1998 Plays in all three games as Spain fall at first hurdle at the World Cup in France.
1998-99 Still only 28, he has already played 282 League games, and boasts 41 caps and eight goals for Spain. Scores eight goals in his first 19 League games this term. In a March poll, 55 per cent of Barça fans vote him the club's mid-season MVP.

Close call...playing for Real Madrid against Juventus

Title fighters

Dominique Baldy and Nick Bidwell report on the one team who stand between Marseille and the French championship

IF MARSEILLE'S seemingly all-conquering line-up harboured any illusions that they would be cantering home to the French championship unopposed this season, they were forced to forget all about them after the first half-hour of their sensational late-January clash with Bordeaux, their only realistic title challengers.

It took the rampant *Girondins* just 32 minutes to open up a four-goal lead against Laurent Blanc and company, eventually going on to win 4-1 and leapfrog their more fancied rivals into pole position. The lead has changed hands on more than one occasion since that heady night at the Parc Lescure, reinforcing the view that we have a genuine two-horse race on our hands.

Bordeaux's success has been testimony to the effectiveness of coach Elie Baup, who emerged from the shadows midway through last season, taking over from Guy Stephan, to whom he had been assistant.

Baup led the drifting team he inherited to a fifth-place finish and the League Cup Final, which they lost only on penalties to Paris Saint-Germain.

Since then, Baup's players have carried on the good work, mounting a serious tilt at the title, which they last won in 1987 in the days when Jean Tigana bossed their midfield and which eluded even the mid-1990s team that boasted Zidane, Dugarry and Lizarazu. Bordeaux also joined Marseille in the quarter-finals of the UEFA Cup, and though they suffered a demoralising defeat by Parma, the consolation is that they are now free to focus on the League campaign, while Marseille are still fighting on two fronts following their victory over Celta Vigo.

"If we can carry on playing as we did against Marseille, we have nothing to fear from anyone," said an upbeat Baup after his team had comprehensively beaten their championship rivals "We've been improving steadily over the last two years, the players are more familiar with each other, and we are continually raising our standards.

"There's a long way to go, and Marseille are a very good team, but our challenge is to keep the race alive to the very last game. The spirit in the side is our major strength, and we've got to keep coming back to that when the going gets tough, as it will at times."

Goals have been the key to Bordeaux's great season, with the *Girondins* the top scoring side in the division by some distance. The success of strike duo Sylvain Wiltord and Lilian Laslandes, the top two scorers in the League, has been such that the name of the legendary Jean-Pierre Papin has barely been mentioned at the club since he left last summer.

Laslandes is enjoying the best form of his career, and although he has the build of the classic target man, he is deceptively skilful and never shy of attempting his spectacular trademark bicycle kick. Wiltord, relishing his new role as a central striker, is the ideal foil, whether moving out wide to supply Laslandes or taking advantage of his partner's flick-ons with his impressive pace and strength.

Behind them, the team have two of the country's finest playmakers in Ali Benarbia and Johan Micoud, both of whom might well have achieved international recognition by now were it not for the likes of Zidane and Djorkaeff barring the route.

Mopping up behind this attacking quartet is experienced skipper Michel Pavon, while the progress made over the season by goalkeeper Ulrich Rame earned him a call-up to the France squad for the friendly against Morocco in January.

With the rest of the pack trailing some distance behind, the *Girondins* have virtually booked their passage into next season's Champions League. This in itself is an achievement well above pre-season expectation, but Laslandes believes the team have what it takes to go one better and pip Marseille for the silverware in what is proving to be a vintage year.

"Beating Marseille so convincingly made France sit up and take notice of us, and made it clear that our position was no fluke. The fact we've taken four points off them this season must mean something. They might have a bigger squad, which allows them to rotate players more, but I think ours is more tightly knit as a consequence, and that might be an advantage.

"Also, Marseille have spent a lot of money in their quest for the title, whereas we never set out expecting to win the League, so I think that can only add to the pressure that's on them."

The *Girondins* will need to draw on all that team spirit in the weeks ahead to compensate for their lack of star quality. But as that famous victory and subsequent results have shown, Bordeaux are not ready yet to be moved by the seemingly irresistible force of Marseille.

Home view...Bordeaux's Parc Lescure

Rapid rise...Elie Baup

THE COACH

Elie BAUP
Born: 17.03.55. Played in goal for French Third Division sides Mazamet and Muret before becoming youth and then reserve team boss during seven years at Toulouse. In 1990 he was appointed head of Saint-Etienne's football academy, and four years later replaced Jacques Santini as first-team manager. After being fired in spring 1996, he was taken on as an assistant coach by Bordeaux at the start of last season and within six months was promoted to the top job at the club.

GOALKEEPERS

Ulrich RAME
19.09.72. Steady, no-frills keeper who gets the job done with the minimum of fuss. Joined the club from Angers in summer 1997 and took full advantage of the erratic form of Dutchman Stanley Menzo to establish himself as the team's number one. In excellent form this season, he was rewarded for his efforts with a call-up to the French squad for the friendly with Morocco in January.

Marc DELAROCHE
18.04.71. Spent five seasons at Monaco as cover for Jean-Luc Ettori and Fabien Barthez, and now holds a similar position at Bordeaux. Joined from Caen in 1997.

DEFENDERS

Kodjo AFANOU
21.11.77. In an emergency, Baup invariably turns to this high-class product of the Bordeaux youth set-up. Since making his first team breakthrough in October 1996, he has played at full-back, in central defence and in midfield, and a bright future is assured. Born in Togo, but now holds French citizenship and has represented his adopted nation at Under-21 level.

Herve ALICARTE
07.10.74. Cultured central defender who moved to Bordeaux last summer after four years at Montpellier. Has struck up a fine partnership at the heart of the defence with Saveljic. A member of the France side who won the World Military Championship in 1995 and recently was included in France's B team.

Romain FERRIER
24.02.76. Promising young left-back and Under-21 international signed from Cannes in summer 1997. This season he has had to play second fiddle to Torres Mestre, but he has always looked the part when pitched into the first team by Baup.

Francois GRENET
08.03.75. The only survivor of the Bordeaux side who were beaten finalists in the 1996 UEFA Cup. An adventurous, energetic right-sided full-back or wing-back, he joined the club as a 14-year-old. Has Under-21 and B international honours.

David JEMMALI
13.12.74. Dynamic right-back and another who arrived as a promising youngster from Cannes in summer 1997.

Nisa SAVELJIC (Yug)
27.03.70. Centre-back signed from Partizan Belgrade at the beginning of last season. Physical and highly competitive, he is the cornerstone of the Bordeaux defensive system. A member of Yugoslavia's France 98 squad, though he played only once.

Victor TORRES MESTRE (Spa)
31.12.70. A large proportion of Bordeaux attacks are begun by this attack-conscious left-back, who has settled very quickly in France following a move last summer from Espanyol. Started his career in the Real Madrid youth ranks.

MIDFIELDERS

Ali BENARBIA
08.10.68. Outstanding on the right of midfield since arriving from Monaco last summer, he has given Bordeaux's attacking play an extra dimension. Benarbia has made more goals this season than anyone else in France, but he does have a temperament problem; he was recently banned for two months for stamping on a linesman's foot. With Zinedine Zidane likely to fill the playmaker role for France for the foreseeable future, Benarbia is considering whether to make himself available to Algeria, his country of birth. A French League winner with Monaco in 1997.

Lassina DIABATE (IvC)
16.09.74. Ivory Coast international whose energy and ball-winning ability provide the platform from which Benarbia and Micoud can perform. Signed from Perpignan in summer 1997 and acknowledged by Baup to be one of the revelations of the season.

Bruno DA ROCHA
25.10.77. Permanently on the bench this term, but Bordeaux expect great things from this graduate of their football academy. Made his First Division debut last season.

Johan MICOUD
24.07.73. Must be on the verge of breaking into the France squad. In his third season at Bordeaux following a move from Cannes, he can do it all: tackle, pass accurately, finish and score direct from free-kicks. Often likened in style to Eric Cantona, he used to have the same sort of disciplinary record, but of late has cut out the red and yellow cards. According to Baup: "When Micoud plays well, Bordeaux play well."

Kiki MUSAMPA (Hol)
20.07.77. No doubt about his technique and pace on the left of midfield, but at both his first club, Ajax, and Bordeaux, whom he joined at the start of the 97-98 campaign, a lack of consistency has scuppered Musampa's plans for regular first-team football. Hails from the former Zaire, but is now a naturalised Dutchman and has Under-21 caps with Holland.

Michel PAVON
07.11.68. Born in the south coast shipyard town of La Ciotat, he supported nearby Marseille as a youngster. Now, this non-stop grafter with above-average distribution skills is captain of Bordeaux, whom he joined in June 1996 after eight years with Toulouse and two with Montpellier.

Much improved...Lilian Laslandes

Ivan VUKOMANOVIC (Yug)
19.06.77. Back-up midfielder little used this season. Bought nine months ago from Obilic Belgrade.

FORWARDS

Lilian LASLANDES
04.09.71. Though Bordeaux-born, he made his name as an awkward but effective striker at Auxerre, helping them win the French Cup in 1994 and a League and Cup double two years later. Got his wish to sign for his hometown club in June 1997 and has not stopped improving since, gaining in mobility, becoming much more comfortable on the ball and surprising more than a few markers with his spectacular forward play, especially his overhead kicks. Renowned for his selflessness and spirit, his 14 goals in 25 games this season have done much to put the League title within Bordeaux's reach. Capped twice for France.

IVAN Perez Munoz (Spa)
29.01.76. Signed from Real Betis at the turn of the year to replace the Arsenal-bound Kaba Diawara. Like his elder brother, Spain international Alfonso, he came off the Real Madrid production line.

Sylvain WILTORD
10.05.74. The French First Division's top marksman this season with 17 goals by the beginning of March. Blessed with an explosive turn of pace and cute finishing skills, he began his career as a right-sided midfielder or winger at Rennes, who later successfully converted him into an all-purpose attacker. He signed for Bordeaux in summer 1997 and won his first cap, as a second-half sub, against England in February.

e Wanderley Luxemburgo

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e Janeiro talks to Brazil's national coach

Final brought about a generational change in one of the hottest seats in soccer – coaching Brazil. Mario Zagallo, the only man involved in all four of his country's World Cup wins, but by the end described in one Brazilian publication as "looking as if he is on the run from an OAP home", had to go.

He was replaced by Wanderley Luxemburgo, more than 20 years younger, with his sharp suits and computer jargon ("First we'll draw up a macro-plan" was his comment when he took over).

The new coach was a shrewd political choice. He was born and spent most of his playing career in Rio de Janeiro, but his coaching successes have come in Sao Paulo, giving him a rare ability to unite the cities that dominate the Brazilian game.

World Soccer caught up with Luxemburgo after a few months in his new job to find out how he is coping.

***WORLD SOCCER*: Last year you combined the Brazil job with coaching a club side, Corinthians. Now you're with Brazil full time. Is it better for a national team coach to do only one job?**

WANDRLEY LUXEMBURGO: It's something that needs to be talked about. Now I'm full time with Brazil, I have the chance to observe everything that's going on. But I'm not doing the main activity of a coach, the work out on the training ground. And if you stop doing an activity you lose something, you get out of practice. So in this sense I feel that you lose a lot by being full time. But the advantage is that, as well as having time to observe, you're not so exposed to criticism. You only get shot at for what happens with the national team. If you're with a club as well, you get criticised for what happens with both, you're very exposed.

Key man...Rivaldo played against Ecuador

So far, your Brazil team have played only three games. You were at home to Yugoslavia, with a Brazilian referee who hit the headlines for his biased performance. Then you took on Ecuador, who got a team together just for that match. Then Russia, who brought the reserves of the reserves and had to face a heat difference of 40 degrees. Do you see much value in these games?

Now you're knocking Brazil. You're just talking about negative things. In your view Brazil were worth nothing in these games.

I'll put the question another way. Do you think that Brazil could find a better way to prepare?

The Brazil team prepare in the same way that England prepare. Do England play only against Brazil, Germany, Italy? No, they play against Malta, Cyprus. I want to play against England, Germany, Italy – countries with a strong tradition – so we can learn about other styles of play. But it's complicated. We invited Italy. They don't want to come. We invited England, who have a contract with the CBF. They owe us a game, but say they can't come because they don't have any free dates.

Brazil are sponsored by Nike, and several of your games this year are against teams also sponsored by Nike. Is the company choosing your opponents?

The role of Nike is very simple. They are our partner. In the case of another country that Nike sponsor, obviously they are going to help that game take place. But if I'm not interested in playing this country, the game won't happen. I defend Nike, but they don't pay me, it's the CBF that pay me. I defend them because they don't decide anything. I make the decisions, I choose the players and direct the tactics. The stronger partners we have, the better it is for Brazilian football. Obviously, they want to invest in something that gives them a return. They're not going to pay for an event in a *favela* [shanty town] in Rio. They're going to pay their money to go to the World Cup, where everyone will see Nike showing off their products. It's business.

Making his point...Wanderley Luxemburgo cuts a dashin

So you have to be firm, to draw a line determining what is possible and what isn't?

Of course. That's how I'll have to be. If not, they'll determine how and when the event will be. They can make a proposal, and I decide whether or not it's possible for the players to attend at that time. If not I say, "Today it's not on, but tomorrow at such and such a time is possible, so let's transfer it." I don't see anything strange in this. Other countries have sponsors. I don't understand why there's all this fuss about ours.

What lessons did you learn from the World Cup?

Tactically I didn't see anything different. There hasn't been any tactical revolution in the past few years. But I saw more versatility from the players, particularly the defensive midfielders, who showed much more ability on the ball. France had Petit and Deschamps, two players with quality. Holland had Davids and Jonk, Seedorf too, while Brazil played with Dunga and Cesar Sampaio, two players with different characteristics.

You are clearly introducing more versatile players into the Brazil team.

Exactly. I want my players participating more in our all-round play. We're not going to have two fixed attackers, four fixed midfielders, and so on. We need more variations, to confuse our opponents. We could play one attacker or we could play four. Someone like [Udinese's Marcio] Amoroso, for example, can either operate up front or a bit further back. This mobility and changing of positions has to exist.

So you're planning massive changes from the team who went to France?

Some of the players from the World Cup are at an age when their time has now passed. But some of the others, players who were heavily criticised, have every chance of returning. It depends on them. You should not forget a player just because he did not do well in one World Cup. The history of the competition shows that a bad World Cup today can mean a good one

'igure on the touchline

tomorrow. Dunga, for example, was banished from Brazilian football after 1990 as an example of how not to play. Then in 1994 he was the one who held up the cup. So I don't want to forget Roberto Carlos or Junior Baiano. These players have time to mature and improve. The necessary changes will be made, but I'm going to give some continuity to the work done by Zagallo. Brazilian football needs to modernise, but that does not necessarily mean imitating Europe. We need to add more professionalism to our game. It's not enough to be a football player – we need to have football professionals, aware of their responsibilities and obligations. We are making progress with this, but we still have a long way to go. I want us to play with all our ability, our skill on the ball and capacity to improvise – but with responsibility. No dribbling in our own penalty area just because it looks good for the crowd.

With World Cup qualifying due to start in March next year, do you already have an idea of your first-choice team?
Yes, it's in my head. We'll play the Copa America with a strong line-up, and the base of that team will go on to dispute the World Cup qualifiers.

Is the lack of options at centre-back a worry?
It's a question mark for us, but it's not as worrying as right-back, where we have a lot of problems. If I was a gifted midfielder in Brazil, I would be begging my coach to try me out at right-back, because it's where our needs are greatest.

Do you see it as a problem that so many of your players are in Europe?
No, I think it's great. We live in a globalised world. Before, we did not have access to the imported products that we have nowadays in Brazil. Football is a product. The exchange enriches us. Our players in Europe improve their standard of living and develop as players and professionals. They come back to us better.

What about Denilson, who is struggling in Spain?
I knew that he would have problems. The players from big clubs here in Brazil are used to winning, to being champions and getting into the national team. Then it's not good if they go to a small club, and they're fighting against relegation. If Juninho had gone to Arsenal or Manchester United, his time in England would have been better. In the case of Denilson, he went from Sao Paulo to Betis. They wanted him to win them the title, but the players around him don't have the same ability that he does. Look at Rivaldo. Since he's gone to Europe he's developed. He was one of Brazil's best players in the World Cup, and the trend is for him to keep on improving.

What about Ronaldo?
I don't need to keep in constant touch for him to know that he's important to me. He already knows that. He has had problems and said that he wanted a bit more time so that he would be ready when next we call him. With him, as soon as he's back playing, he's in the team. Once he's got three or four games under his belt, all this talk about his psychological problems will be forgotten.

You usually cut an elegant figure at the side of the pitch in a suit and tie. Is this style of dress a tribute to European coaches?
No, it's more a case of trying to make sure that Brazilian coaches receive their due value. My idea of dress in this way was influenced by Franz Beckenbauer. Everybody here in Brazil were very impressed with his elegance when he was coaching Germany. I put on a suit to send out a message that here is a football professional, and that's an important conquest for us. We need this because it seems that we Brazilians can't go and take charge of a club in England. But an English coach can go to Holland, Spain or Portugal. Is it true that we Brazilians are only fit to coach teams in Brazil? I don't see it like that. We have the ability to coach anywhere in the world.

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to see the essence of a game, and make decisive tactical changes".

Luxemburgo's playing career is usually described as 'unmemorable' in the Brazilian press. He retorts: "I was the only player to relegate Junior to the bench, so I can't have been too bad."

His playing career was shortened by injury, and after coaching for a time with Olaria he joined Campo Grande, who he took to the Brazilian Second Division title in 1983. He coached several clubs over the next few years, including a spell in the Middle East, before emerging on the national stage with Bragantino, a small club from the interior of Sao Paulo. In 1989 he won the Second Division with them, and the Sao Paulo state championship the following year.

Luxemburgo hit the big time in 1993, with Palmeiras, winning both the Sao Paulo and the Brazilian championships, and repeated the double in 1994.

He then joined Flamengo but left after a dispute with the directors, who refused to discipline Romario for missing training. Back at Palmeiras, his side won the Paulista championship in the first half of 1996, scoring 102 goals in their 30 games.

'Wanderer' also had a brief spell with Parana and coached Santos to victory in the Rio-Sao Paulo tournament before he joined Corinthians at the start of 1998. In August he was appointed Brazil coach, and celebrated by taking his club to the Brazilian championship.

When your time is up in the Brazil job would you like to coach a big team in Europe?
That's my idea. I think I can coach Barcelona, I think I can coach Manchester United. In the same way that their coaches can work with a Brazilian club. I don't see any problem with this type of interchange. It already exists in European football, and I don't understand why Brazil is out of the loop. Maybe we're ruled out because of language or cultural differences. But who would have said that Ossie Ardiles could go from Argentina to England, play well, and then become a coach? It's a question of language. He adapted, and I think a Brazilian can do that. I'm studying English, I speak it reasonably well and it's something I'm working on, so that if one day the call comes from Manchester United I'll be ready to make the adaptation. I already have the professional ability, and I want to be able to have those kinds of opportunities in the future.

unlikely lads

Arnhem: e Gelredome

Just magic...Herbert Neumann

THEY SAY moving house can be a stressful experience. But not for high-flying Dutch side and would-be Champions League newcomers Vitesse Arnhem.

After the removal vans left their old Monnikenhuize ground a year ago for the swanky new £43million Gelredome complex, Vitesse won all seven games played there last season and remained unbeaten at home this term until falling 2-1 to Fortuna Sittard in early March.

Indeed, Vitesse's concerted bid to force their way into the Champions League reckoning – the Dutch League's top two go straight into the group stage – has been almost exclusively based on the construction of Fortress Gelredome.

Prior to the Sittard defeat, they had won nine out of 10 home matches in 1998-99, dropping points only when runaway League leaders Feyenoord equalised in injury time of their mid-December game with a Jean-Paul Van Gastel free-kick.

However, the Arnhem club's away performances have too often looked a pale imitation of their displays at the Gelredome, and they have won only twice on the road in 11 attempts this season – at Fortuna Sittard and Willem II.

All the same, second place in the table after three-quarters of the campaign is no mean achievement for a club without major Dutch honours and who have had to cope with their fair share of ill fortune this season.

Popular and highly influential Serb attacker Dejan 'DJ' Curovic has been sidelined for lengthy spells with knee and ankle injuries, while there was disruption aplenty in October when Portuguese coach Artur Jorge upped and left, only three months into his mandate, to return to his old Paris Saint-Germain haunt.

The Arnhem board, who had hardly expected to be looking for a new coach so soon, decided to roll back the years in the search for Jorge's successor. They persuaded Herbert Neumann to leave NAC Breda and begin a second stint in charge at Vitesse.

It was a wise move. In the 1992-93 and 1993-94 seasons, the ex-Koln midfielder guided Vitesse to consecutive fourth-place finishes in the Dutch League, and the old Neumann magic has worked second time around in Arnhem.

Futuristic...the Gelredome (above and right)

"It's never easy to jump into a coaching job when the season is under way," said the 45-year-old German. "But in returning to Vitesse I've not taken any risks. It's not as if I'm a stranger to the club.

"These are exciting times for Vitesse. They have been among the top half-dozen teams in Holland for at least a decade. But now the signs are that this club is moving up to an even higher level of competitiveness.

"Roda and particularly PSV and Ajax will push us all the way. But I'm confident we have the ability and strong nerves to hold on to a Champions League qualifying spot."

If Vitesse do go on to rub shoulders with the likes of Man United, Barcelona and Lazio next season, the prowess of their Greek striker Nikos Mahlas will have been a major factor. With 34 Dutch League goals to his credit in 1997-98, Mahlas was instrumental in his club's unprecedented third-place finish, and his prolific scoring has carried over into the current campaign, with 14 goals from 23 games.

Yet despite all the individual accolades – he was Holland's top scorer in 1997-98 and won the Golden Shoe as Europe's leading marksman – Mahlas is keeping his feet on the ground.

"As far as I know, football is a team sport," he maintains. "I wouldn't have been successful without the help of my team-mates. I might have scored a lot of goals, but Vitesse is not the Nikos Mahlas Show."

Quite so. Talented and willing accomplices surround Mahlas. Ex-Ajax academy graduates Martin Reuser, a forward, and schemer Michel Kreek have brought flair and good footballing habits to the Vitesse mix; ever-improving left-back Marc Van Hintum is now a fixture in the Dutch squad; Scotland's Scott Booth has impressed up front during his loan spell from Borussia Dortmund; and everyone is raving about the club's teenage African midfield sensations, Mamadou Zongo and Matthew Amoah from Burkina Faso.

Vitesse certainly have come a long way since the bleak times of the mid-80s when newly-arrived president Karel Aalbers and executive committee chairman Guus Kusse fought against bankruptcy.

The ambitious and visionary Vitesse management team are still in place today and their sickly baby has grown into a healthy adult. The sporting and financial balance sheets speak for themselves. After gaining promotion to the Dutch First Division in 1989, Vitesse have been in the top six permanently, while the club's annual budget (£10.5m in 1998-99) is 30 times what it was in 1985.

The futuristic Gelredome, with its sliding roof and moveable pitch, is to be a Euro 2000 venue and would seem the ideal stage for Holland's most go-ahead club. In an environmentally-friendly move, all 26,500 seats at the stadium were manufactured by melting down old garden furniture collected in the Arnhem region. Vitesse have the potential to be equally successful recycling success.

Nick Bidwell

Flair player...Martin Reuser

Top scorer...Nikos Mahlas

Next year's expanded Champions League looks set to feature some clubs who have never won their domestic championship. We profile the surprise teams of the European season

Boavista:
Porto's other half

Strong at the back...Rui Bento

Dynamic...Jorge Couto

Home patch...Boavista's Bessa stadium

BOAVISTA'S president, Dr Joao Loureiro, is not yet suffering from any delusions of grandeur. This is despite the fact that his unfashionable club, sited in the Bessa district of Oporto, have undergone an unexpected metamorphosis of late into genuine challengers to the long-standing national supremacy of cross-city foes FC Porto, and Benfica of Lisbon.

With Boavista enjoying their best League season since finishing second in 1975-76, nobody would blame Loureiro if he indulged in triumphalist rhetoric or unveiled a five-year plan to establish the club as a powerhouse in Portuguese football. However, the president prefers pragmatism to flights of fancy.

"I'm proud of what we have achieved this season and am very hopeful we will have something to show for our efforts come June," says Loureiro, who followed his father Valentim into the Boavista hot-seat.

"I'm also proud that a third of our squad was produced by our youth system. But it would be an error to set winning the League title as an annual objective if it meant taking excessive financial risks.

"We are a well-run club. Yet even now we have to perform gymnastics to meet our wage and tax bills. We are also committed to improving our stadium and training facilities. That's where we have invested the money we received from the transfers of Nuno Gomes and Hasselbaink [sold to Benfica and Leeds United respectively].

"Boavista cannot compete with the salaries on offer at top Portuguese sides like Benfica, FC Porto and Sporting Lisbon. They can pay three or four times more than us. They operate in a different universe. It's fantasy to think a club like Boavista will be able to battle for the title after the year 2000."

Just as well then that Boavista are firmly on the championship trail right now. And what a good fist the team wearing those unmistakable black and white checked shirts are making of it.

They lost only twice in their first 25 League games – at Estrela Amadora (2-1) and Maritimo of Madeira (3-0). But, more significantly, Boavista have looked anything but poor relations in their duels with their closest rivals, pulling off a shock 2-0 win at FC Porto early in the season, holding their city neighbours 0-0 in the return, and beating Benfica 2-1 at home and 3-0 in Lisbon.

The win at the Stadium of Light took Boavista to within one point of leaders FC Porto, and they have a fighting chance to become the first club from outside the Portuguese Big Three – FC Porto, Benfica and Sporting Lisbon – to scoop the League title since Belenenses in 1946.

Even if Boavista fail to capture the first championship of their 95-year history, the runners-up spot earns them an invitation to the third qualifying round of the Champions League.

Much of the credit for the improvement in the team's fortunes must go to coach Jaime Pacheco, who has added staying power to a club with a tradition for being better suited to short-course cup competitions – Boavista have won five Portuguese Cups (1975, 1976, 1979, 1992, 1997).

Pacheco, an intelligent, busy and precise midfielder who starred for Portugal, Sporting Lisbon, FC Porto and Vitoria Setubal, has built a Boavista team in his own playing image, a side who get results on the back of effective pressing tactics and a neat, incisive short-passing game.

Given the coach's record as a player, it is no surprise that the real strength of his team lies in midfield. Luis Manuel and a new signing from Sporting Lisbon, Pedro Martins, man the ball-winning department, Jorge Couto is a dynamic presence on the right, and the brilliant Romanian left-footer Ion Timofte combines a playmaking role with an aptitude for scoring – 13 goals so far this season.

Jorge Couto and Timofte are the Boavista glamour boys, and fans of the club were delighted last month when both agreed to contract extensions: one year for Timofte and four for Couto. But they are not the only ones to have shone in the chessboard jerseys this term.

Skipper Litos, Rui Bento, Pedro Emanuel and the Brazilian Isaias form an obdurate rearguard, pacy left-sided wing-back William Quevedo has been a revelation, and Ghanaian attacker Ayew Kwame – the younger brother of former Marseille star Abedi Pele – has weighed in with his share of goals.

"We are going to do everything to win the title and thwart FC Porto and Benfica," declares Jaime Pacheco. "Above all, we intend to make life very difficult for them."

Nick Bidwell

Big contribution...Ayew Kwame

Genk:
Belgium's baby boomers

Moving on...Aime Anthuenis

THE 18 double-decker coaches parked tightly together in Meensedsteenweg Straat outside Kortrijk's homely stadium provided ample testimony to Racing Genk's current popularity in Belgium.

Supporters never have been reluctant to back a winning team, but when that team is born out of a mining community with an Italian influence close to the German border, then the flavour is irresistible to the blue and white hordes.

So it was on that recent midweek night when Genk visited Kortrijk, second from bottom of the Belgian First Division, and triumphed 3-1. So it is on every ground that welcomes a team who may well become the least fashionable Belgian champions, and one of the youngest clubs ever to compete in the European Cup.

Crowds are flocking to watch Genk, notwithstanding the upset to their title challenge which came with a surprise 1-0 defeat at Beveren, who had collected only three points from the previous 42 at stake. Assuming they recover from that blemish, Genk will stay on course for the Double, which in postwar years has been the property only of the big two, Club Brugge and Anderlecht.

Both will be embarrassed should Genk, who were formed as recently as the 1988-89 season, emulate their feat. Only Lierse, in a two-legged semi-final, stand between Genk and another Cup final.

Genk, situated in the eastern province of Limburg, is one of three towns in a conurbation whose main industry was mining. When the mines closed, the recession hit the region's top two clubs, Waterschei and Winterslag. They could not carry on independently so they merged as Genk, with results they could not have envisaged in their wildest fantasies.

Genk do not even play their home fixtures in the town but at Waterschei's former home, Thyl Gheyselinckstadion – named after an old mining leader – and reserve games are staged at Winterslag's ground.

Under the shrewd management of Aime Anthuenis, who looks older than his 55 years, Genk have improved rapidly and become a force. They were promoted from the Second Division in 1995-96, and became established in the upper tier before disputing the honours last season.

Brugge beat them to the title with 18 points to spare but the distance was almost the same the other way round in the Cup: Genk's 4-0 victory was the biggest winning margin in the final for 17 years.

Marksman in chief...Branko Strupar is set to top the goalscoring charts again

Home from home...Genk play at the compact Thyl Gheyselinckstadion

Sadly for Genk, Anthuenis has accepted an offer to coach Anderlecht next season, and Westerlo's Jos Heyligen has been lined up as his replacement. Heyligen, a former midfielder with both Waterschei and Winterslag, will arrive in the summer on a two-year contract with a further two-year option.

Even if the Champions League beckons, he will do well to keep the team together. The three players to have risen from the Second Division with Anthuenis include the captain and longest servant, Domenico Olivieri, who is such a natural sweeper that it is no surprise to discover he is of Italian descent. The other two are Chris Van Geem, one of the two markers just in front of Olivieri, and midfielder Wilfried Delbroek, who made his international debut in a recent 1-0 victory in Cyprus.

That trio are among the team's workers who provide the foundations behind the more talented, cosmopolitan threesome of Thordur Gudjonsson, Branko Strupar and Souleymane Oulare.

Gudjonsson is an Icelandic international who provides the flair from midfield. The chief beneficiary is Strupar, a Croatian likely to finish as the leading scorer in Belgium for the second season running.

Oulare is almost as prolific. Much as Anthuenis would like to take the deadly Guinean striker with him to Anderlecht, the player's overwhelming desire to play in France next season means that he will almost certainly be helping Metz, Lyon or Lens instead of aiding Genk – or Anderlecht, for that matter – in Europe.

The expected fee of £2.5million will help towards replacements but may not be enough to help Genk resume their European adventures. Assuming they qualify for Europe, that is.

King Baudouin Stadium, where Genk staged their Cup-winners Cup ties, is too expensive and their own home is inadequate, so Sclessin, the home of Standard Liege – revamped in readiness for Euro 2000 – is on stand-by as an alternative European venue next season.

France bound...Souleymane Oulare

As domestic cup-winners Genk already have sampled their first brief experience of European fare. Enjoyable it was too, until their elimination by Real Mallorca on the away goals rule. That second-round exit was doubly frustrating because Genk, who had gone through the preliminaries, went out without losing a game.

The only Belgian clubs to have the satisfaction of outsmarting Anthuenis before the final run-in were Lokeren, Brugge, Anderlecht and, of course, Beveren.

In front of their own fans who make every home fixture a passionate, raucous occasion, only Harelbeke – who drew 2-2 – had the audacity to deprive Genk of full points.

Nicholas Harling

Perennial chasers...Molde almost broke Rosenborg's stranglehold on the Norwegian championship last season

Attack minded...Erik Brakstad

Molde: Norwegian wannabes

MOLDE, formed in 1911, have never won the Norwegian championship. Indeed, their only national success came in 1994, when they won the domestic cup.

They started the 1998 season with one ultimate target: they had a new stadium and desperately wanted to be the club to put an end to Rosenborg's succession of titles. For two-thirds of the season they seemed capable of doing it, but a loss of form during the run-in gave Rosenborg the chance to topple them from the top.

Once the old masters had taken the lead, Molde had no chance of coming back. They eventually finished second, nine points behind, as Rosenborg cruised to their seventh successive title.

Molde also had been runners-up in 1982, 1987 and 1995, but their latest second placing is different. It entitles the club to enter the Champions League later this year, with the chance of increased glory and cash.

The club, situated on the western coast about 230 miles north of Bergen, have always been famous for an attacking style, using players with flair. Aage Hareide, Kjetil Rekdal, Oyvind Leonhardsen, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Petter Rudi all came through the ranks of Molde's football academy. The club's junior sides have always been among the country's best, and their football academy is a model for others.

The new 14,000-capacity stadium cost £15 million and was created largely through the efforts of two fans, Kjell Inge Rokke and Kjell Rune Gjelsten, who have invested heavily in the club.

Aage Hareide had periods of success as head coach at Molde but when he chose to try his luck in Sweden with Helsingborgs a couple of years ago, assistant Erik Brakstad took over. He continued with the attacking style of play, preferring a 4-3-3 system. Despite the good start to the domestic season the club failed to progress in Europe and lost to CSKA Sofia in the qualifying round for the UEFA Cup.

"We were still too inexperienced at this level," said Brakstad. "We have to be more cynical next time around. But we can't wait to start our new attempt."

Molde players include goalkeeper Morten Bakke, who has played more than 340 games for the club, and recently spent a period with Wimbledon as cover for Neil Sullivan. A well-drilled defence is built round Pal Lydersen, the former Arsenal player who represented Norway 20 times, and Trond Andersen, who has played 30 times for Norway's under 21 side. Andersen is a former team-mate of Solskjaer at Clausenengen and he too dreams of a professional career abroad.

The midfield often buzzes, with Karl Oskar Fjortoft and Daniel Berg Hestad constantly on the go. Berg Hestad, in particular, is one to watch. A phlegmatic player who can be brilliant for long periods only to exaggerate his individual exploits seconds later, he comes from a famous football family and has already won his first cap for Norway.

Up front, Andreas Lund and Odd Inge Olsen shared 28 League goals last season. Lund failed a medical when on the verge of signing for Coventry last autumn, but has fully recovered. Originally from Kristiansand, Lund played for Start for two seasons before he was signed by Molde as their most expensive player at the time. Strong and excellent in the air, Lund is expected to score more than the 16 goals he achieved last season.

Molde have not had a competitive match since the end of the season last October, but Brakstad is eager to continue where the team left off in 1998. "We'll continue to play attacking football as Molde always have done," he said. "Hopefully we will last the whole season and keep Rosenborg behind us."

Brakstad must rely on last year's squad, with Finnish international Jarkko Wiss, from HJK Helsinki, the only newcomer.

Sigurd Odegaard

Midfield dynamo...Karl Fjortoft

Defensive linchpin...Pal Lydersen

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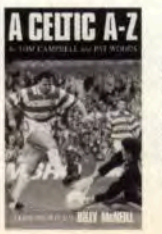

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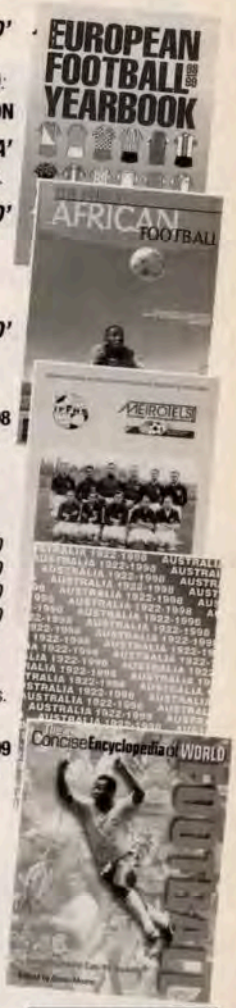

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All is lost at Inter

Paddy Agnew on the collapse of a giant

Going nowhere...Ronaldo failed to make an impression against Manchester United at San Siro

ON THE DAY that Internazionale were humiliated in a 4-0 away loss to Sampdoria in late March, the club's Romanian coach Mircea Lucescu announced his resignation.

"We simply can't go on like this," he said. "Blame it all on me if you like. In any case you all saw the game yourselves, you saw what happened."

What happened was that a dispirited, disorganised and anarchic Inter had slumped to a miserable seventh defeat in 10 outings. Their wretched defeat by Sampdoria had rounded off a spectacularly bad two-month run in which they were knocked out of the Champions League by Manchester United, eliminated from the Italian Cup by Parma, and wiped out of the Serie A title contest by defeats against Perugia, Lazio, Bari and Sampdoria.

As critics paused to analyse the smouldering ruins of Inter's season, however, one thing seemed fairly obvious. Nobody in their right minds could 'blame it all' on Lucescu. No doubt he made mistakes during his four-month stay (December to March). However, the dismal failure of the Inter season bespoke a crisis in top-level administration and management. Put it another way, the 'company culture' at Inter seems, at the very least, confused.

Before Lucescu's resignation, the Inter season had been marked by two factors. Firstly, post-World Cup weariness and the absence of Brazilian ace Ronaldo had combined to set the side off to a poor start, both in Serie A and in the Champions League. Secondly, that poor start prompted owner-president Massimo Moratti to make a radical move, offloading coach Gigi Simoni and replacing him with Lucescu last December.

It requires no genius to conclude now that the appointment of Lucescu was a mistake. He arrived with a short-term contract through to the end of the season, when ex-Juventus coach Marcello Lippi is scheduled to take over. That short-term contract appears to have undermined his relationship with the players.

Furthermore, Lucescu had been summoned in the hope that his more attacking philosophy might coincide with Ronaldo's return to fitness. Unfortunately for Inter, Ronaldo has yet to recover from the trauma of his France 98 experience. He did stagger back to play in Inter's last-ditch Champions League quarter-final, second leg with Manchester United, a 1-1 draw, but, given his all-too-obvious lack of fitness and consequent dire performance, it would have been better for both him and Inter if he had not bothered.

So Lucescu was deprived of Ronaldo and in increasing difficulty in his relations with his players. As a consequence, his innate good humour gradually gave way to pessimistic melancholy. As is always the way in soccer, when the results did not go his way, Lucescu found it ever harder to handle the star-studded squad.

Signs of tension emerged in mid-February on the day the side lost 1-0 away to Lazio. During the game, Nigerian defender Taribo West, who had started on the bench, appeared to refuse to go on as a substitute. After the game, he and Lucescu reportedly came to blows in the Inter dressing-room. Behind the scenes, too, other 'star' players (inevitably those dropped by Lucescu) began to undermine morale.

Lest anyone had any doubts that Lucescu had not lost control of his players, Portuguese midfielder Paulo Sousa spelt it out loud and clear in a TV interview, right on the eve of the second leg with Manchester United.

Sousa's timing could not have been worse and there certainly appeared to be no love lost between him and Lucescu when he argued that: a) Inter have no overall tactical gameplan; b) Lucescu's team-talks amount to telling the players to "go out and play"; and c) nothing works in this Inter side.

Most of us would have agreed with the final comment but it hardly seemed appropriate to be hearing it from the mouth of a senior player on the eve of an important game. In the end, the elimination by Manchester United brought the curtain down on Lucescu.

What remains of the Inter season will be entrusted to goalkeeping coach Luciano Castellini, whose task will be to ensure that the side at least qualify for the UEFA Cup. Given the team's standing when he took over (ninth, 19 points behind leaders Lazio), this will not be easy.

Over the 180 minutes against United, Inter did not perhaps enjoy the fairest of refereeing (they will long regret a seemingly good goal from Argentinian Diego Simeone disallowed at Old Trafford and a seemingly clear penalty denied to Chilean Ivan Zamorano at San Siro).

Manchester United, however, clearly deserved to go through and for the quintessential reason that, whatever their limitations (quite serious in the second leg), they nonetheless looked and played like a solid, balanced and organised team. Which is precisely what Inter have failed to do for most of both this season and even last.

The reality about Inter's successful 1997-98 was that it relied too heavily on Ronaldo. Take away his 25 Serie A goals of last season and you were left with a defensive side without a truly competitive DNA. Take away Ronaldo this season and you were left with a side who missed not only *Il Phenomenon*'s goals but also the psychological value of his presence.

Also, too many cooks have been spoiling the Inter broth for too long. In the 14 seasons that Alex Ferguson has managed Manchester United, Inter have seen eight coaches come and go – Giovanni Trapattoni, Corrado Orrico, Luis Suarez, Osvaldo Bagnoli, Ottavio Bianchi, Roy Hodgson, Gigi Simoni and Mircea Lucescu, plus stop-gap roles performed by such as Mario Corso, Giampiero Marini and Luciano Castellini.

In the five seasons of the Moratti regime, Inter have had a huge player turnover, too, with an estimated

£115million being spent on more than 50 players, including some who left little trace at the club (Cinetti, Carbone, Pedroni, Pistone, Landucci, Frezzolini, Mazzantini, Pantanelli, the Argentinian Rambert, Brazilian Caio, Sierra Leone's Kallon, Uruguayan Rivas etc). Other famous names such as Nigerian Kanu, Swiss Sforza, Englishman Ince and Brazilian Roberto Carlos perhaps left the club prematurely, while Uruguayan Recoba, who could not get a game at Inter, went on loan in January to Venezia and immediately turned around that club's season. (At least in Recoba's case, Inter will reclaim their man for next year.)

When one assesses the overall turbulence of recent times at Inter, added to the huge weight of expectation created by the purchase of Ronaldo in the summer of 1997, then it is difficult not to agree with an authoritative Inter old boy, German Lothar Matthaus, when he commented: "In recent years, Inter have simply bought too many players and then put them all out on the field and hoped to make a team.

"Too many players have been bought, apparently without an overall strategy. You cannot hope to keep on starting year after year with lots of new players and then hope to have a stable and balanced side."

One imagines that the disappointed Mircea Lucescu might agree.

For the record, Lucescu's resignation from Inter brought the number of coaching changes in Serie A this season to eight – Corrado Orrico for Mauro Sandreani (Empoli); David Platt for Luciano Spalletti, then Spalletti for Platt (Sampdoria); Edoardo Reja for Franco Colomba (Vicenza); Vujadin Boskov for Ilario Castagner (Perugia); Carlo Ancelotti for Marcello Lippi (Juventus); Lucescu for Simoni, Castellini for Lucescu (Inter).

Also for the record, while some coaches have been having a difficult time, Swede Sven Goran Eriksson has struck while the iron is hot, earning himself a renewed contract with Lazio, through to 2002 and worth an annual £1.4m after tax.

Given the form shown by leaders Lazio this springtime, the renewal of Eriksson's contract seems only logical.

The Rome club's title aspirations will in large part be determined by three successive April games, when they meet Milan, Roma and Juventus. If Lazio come through those matches relatively unharmed, then all the best available evidence suggests that they will go on to win the title. Watch this space...

Interview Sven Goran Eriksson

Keir Radnedge talks to the man who has taken Lazio to the top

SVEN GORAN ERIKSSON sends English football an apology and his best wishes – but the Premiership is not the best league in the world and Italy is the place to be.

In a few quiet sentences the Swedish coach of League leaders Lazio put behind him the controversy over his on-off job at Blackburn Rovers and looked to a Champions League future with his resurgent Italian club.

He says: "I was sorry about the situation with Blackburn two years ago. I have always admired English football, especially the Liverpool model of the 1970s and early 1980s. I was looking forward to working at Blackburn but then there were personal reasons that kept me in Italy instead."

Eriksson's admiration for Liverpool's enduring footballing tradition played no small part in Lazio's interest in the future of English striker Michael Owen. Liverpool and Owen may have been irritated by an Italian magazine's revelation of Lazio's interest, but not half as much as the Italian club and their coach, because transfer market rivals have now been put on alert and Owen's likely value has been increased perhaps even beyond the quoted £25million.

Eriksson says: "Any club would want Owen. He is perhaps the most outstanding young player in Europe. He could not have a better school to learn the game than Liverpool, but if he wants to make the most of his ability then, one day, he must come to Italy."

Lazio, of course, would be the ideal club.

"Football is changing. Sporting and business interests have converged in a way no one would have imagined. Sergio Cragnotti [Lazio president] is the ultimate example of a man who has understood what is happening. That is why he has invested so much in Lazio, and why he intends to go on investing. We will always be interested in the best players available. If, when the time comes, that still includes Michael Owen, then it's just elementary."

Eriksson took over at Lazio in the summer of 1997. Last season they were hailed as the best team in Serie A, winning the Italian Cup and finishing UEFA Cup runners-up to Inter. Then, to everyone's surprise, Cragnotti and Eriksson shipped out half the side and spent more than £70m on new stars, including the fearsome strike duo of Christian Vieri and Chile's Marcelo Salas, plus the Yugoslav free-kick specialist Sinisa Mihajlovic.

They struggled for the first third of the season, with Eriksson's ability to hold the reins being called into question by impatient and baffled fans. Then, in early December, it clicked. Lazio embarked on a run of nine successive victories which took them to the top of the table for the first time in 24 years.

Eriksson, who first came to Italy in 1984, says: "This Lazio are the strongest team I have ever worked with. When I came to Roma originally we had a fine team, with great players like Paulo Falcao, Toninho Cerezo and Giuseppe Giannini. But the pressures then did not compare with the pressures today.

"I would rather have it that way than how it was when I went to Fiorentina, for example. At least with Lazio we have the pressure of knowing we can win the biggest prizes. At Fiorentina, there was always the feeling that, however well we played, other clubs would win things. That's dispiriting for a coach, after a while."

Eriksson remains disappointed at the impatience within football for results. He points to the departures of top-rate coaches such as Jupp Heynckes and Guus Hiddink from Real Madrid and Arrigo Sacchi from Atletico as evidence, as well as the sackings which have marked Serie A so far this season. He says: "The trainer continues to be the most important figure in a club because he organises the team, selects the players and has to be the voice of the club for the media. But the importance of that role in today's game means the coach is also obliged to produce good results – and it's impossible for all 18 coaches to do that simultaneously in the same league."

The Swede has one year left on his three-year Lazio contract and "would be happy" to consider staying beyond that. If Lazio win the League, then a contract extension will certainly be offered by Cragnotti. If not, then Eriksson knows he will not be short of offers. Not only from clubs in Italy...

When asked to name the greatest threat to soccer's credibility, Eriksson does not mention rampant commercialism or 'Bosmanism'. Instead, he points the finger at refereeing. He says: "The development of training and fitness systems means that the game has become faster and faster, making the pitch too big for one man to cover and exposing him to the risk that television picks up every mistake, big and small. Football's not like basketball, where the odd mistake doesn't really matter when one side or another scores more than 100 points.

"Football is a sport in which games are decided by the tightest of margins – 1-0, 2-1 and 1-1 are the most common results. Penalty or not? A cup or a championship can rest on that one decision.

"One of the most fundamental problems is that so few footballers go on to become referees when they retire. There are many excellent referees and many not so good – but almost all of them lack experience of playing at professional level.

"The problem is partly a result of the fact that a top-level referee has to finish by the age of 45, which doesn't give an ex-player much time to come up through the system. The way fitness and training programmes work nowadays, it should be possible for referees to go on at the top level until they are at least 50.

"One way to make that possible would be to reduce the amount of running a referee has to do by using two referees per match – one man to control each half."

Eriksson suggests that the game's governing bodies could investigate the use of technology. They might also, for the biggest competitions, add an extra two officials, positioned at each end of the pitch to take special note of incidents in the penalty box.

"The referee or referees would operate between the penalty boxes – which would help them – and the end-of-pitch officials could concentrate on possible penalty offences and whether the ball crosses the goal line or not," he says. "Above all, however, we must find ways to make it much more attractive for ex-players to graduate to the refereeing ranks."

Tactics? A load of Tosh

Graham Turner on why coaches in Spain are finding it helps to have a degree in mind games

Mr Motivator...Toshack has lifted Real Madrid's League form

"DON'T ask me about tactics," says John Toshack, "I'm only the coach." Recent events in Spain have certainly posed questions about the job description of the modern technician. Has it become such a man-management challenge that tactics have become pure Tosh?

It's a big question which can be attacked from several angles. For a start, there's food for thought in the fact that the two Spanish representatives in the European semis are Real Mallorca, placed, at the time of writing, sixth in the League, and Atletico Madrid, 14th. On the one hand, the data could be used as evidence of the strength of the Spanish League. On the other hand, it could be viewed as proof of the fact that states of mind are as important – if not more so – than ability.

How else can one explain why Atletico were able to destroy Roma away to clinch a place in the UEFA Cup semi-finals, and then, five days later, travel to Vitoria and produce another limp display against humble Alaves? The 2-0 defeat left them with just one point to show from eight League games under Arrigo Sacchi and caretaker Carlos Aguiar. Local critics described Atletico as the worst team they'd seen all season. Jesus Gil shed some presidential tears "out of sheer rage and impotence", and warned: "I will not be the only one weeping." Aguiar tendered his resignation but, significantly, Gil remarked: "I appreciate that this is not a coaching problem." Nevertheless, it wasn't long before the president had put the name of former Atletico coach Raddy Antic in the frame to take the job once more.

Tosh's problem is somewhat different. Guus Hiddink had created a decent Cup team at Real Madrid which could only be persuaded to row in the same direction when there was special motivation for team spirit. Toshack gave priority to blending consistency with individual quality to make a decent League equation. Again, it was a man-management question rather than a blackboard exercise. Curiously, he achieved an immediate success as Real, for the first time during the League campaign, strung three wins together.

It was curious because, in the meantime, they had lost their European crown on a paddy-field of a pitch in Kyiv. Toshack's contributions to orderliness, concentration and team spirit were palpably evident, but he was let down by two errors in the central defensive area and, over the two legs, repeated failure to make contact with the net.

Incidentally, a great meal was made out of the celebrations in Catalonia when Real were knocked off their European perch. There were so many fireworks on the Ramblas that night that new boy Ronald De Boer feared that they were military manoeuvres. Both the city's sports dailies made Real's elimination their gleeful front-page news on the following morning, one of them splashing MADR.I.P. right across the cover. The idea of Real Madrid winning the Champions Cup in Barcelona and parading it around Camp Nou had been giving the Catalans collective nightmares. The fireworks were a method of expressing a collective sigh of relief.

Anyway, in the aftermath of Kyiv, Tosh's next job had nothing to do with the blackboard either. He had to re-motivate a team who, bearing in mind the delicate state of the club's finances, could not be allowed to drift into non-qualification for the new, bigger, brighter Champions League and the mega-pesetas it represents. "The season ticket-holders have paid for 38 games," Toshack announced, "and it's our job to give them value for money."

His attempts at motivation produced an acceptable 2-0 home win over lowly Extremadura but Tosh was not convinced. "Some of them already had their bags packed for international duty," he reflected. "But coming so soon after Kyiv, I'll give them the benefit of the doubt."

He's probably right. Real's performance in the final straight of Spain's marathon championship will depend on attitude rather than tactics.

Before we leave Madrid, a quick postscript about the Mista case, which we mentioned in the February issue. The player and his new club, Tenerife, have finally backed down and have paid Real a transfer fee of £500,000. Mista, as Real president Lorenzo Sanz mischievously predicted, has not been Tenerife's saviour. At the time of writing, they are still 19th out of 20.

Back to coaches and tactics. Down in Valencia, Claudio Ranieri is also working in somewhat peculiar conditions. The fact that his team is challenging for its first title since 1971 and the club's fifth in 64 First Division campaigns should keep the dogs away from the paella. But the lack of problems during this season has made it compulsory to invent some for next season.

> **"Toshack's contribution was evident but he was let down"**

'Will he stay or will he go?' has become such a burning question that club stewards were instructed to remove all pro-Ranieri and anti-Ranieri banners from the Mestalla stadium before the game against Zaragoza. Passions ran so high that one fan had his jaw broken in a punch-up related to the poetic wording of one such banner.

Ranieri and club president Pedro Cortes have also been trading metaphorical punches. The gospel according to Ranieri is that he wanted to stay but is being forced by Cortes to head for pastures new. The gospel according to Cortes is that he wants Ranieri to stay, but the coach – already tapped by half-a-dozen other clubs – wants to leave without damaging his public image. The way to do this, of course, is to allege that he's been booted out of the door.

Valencia's domestic squabbles have also managed to upset the neighbours. In Majorca, there has been an epidemic of

Dream team...Johan Cruyff with the All-Stars at his controversial testimonial

out-of-joint noses following firm reports that Ranieri Mark II answers to the name of Hector Cuper, the coach who has been allowed to get on with some blackboard work and has responded by leading Mallorca into the Cup-winners Cup semi-finals for the first time.

In Seville, Javier Clemente, one of the shrewdest technicians around, has also found that life isn't all blackboard and roses at Betis. As the club's fourth manager of the season, he hasn't exactly inherited the most balanced squad in planet football and results have been correspondingly unbalanced. He's had his run-ins with Paraguayan defender Celso Ayala and, in typical fashion, has not shied away from consigning the world's most expensive signing, Denilson, to the bench.

But his attempts at team-building have not exactly been aided and abetted by fiery club president Manuel Ruiz de Lopera, currently serving a two-month ban for bursting into a referee's dressing-room and delivering selected readings from the gospel according to Lopera. "The ban might be beneficial for Spanish football," commented Clemente with a wry smile.

You would think that Louis Van Gaal would have no such problems. Despite the absences of Luis Figo, Luis Enrique and Ronald De Boer, Barcelona went to San Sebastian and opened up a five-point lead at the top by beating Real Sociedad for the first time in 10 years.

Yet nobody can resist the chance to smudge the chalk on his blackboard. Even Rivaldo, after scoring a goal during the 3-0 home win over Espanyol in the local derby, ripped his shirt off, turned his back to the crowd and pointed with both hands to the No 10 Giovanni shirt he was wearing underneath. The message was clear: he was not happy with Van Gaal's recent policy of not selecting his Brazilian mate, whose form hasn't exactly been optimal, as anybody who saw his Champions League performances would testify. Hence the strong rumours that Rivaldo's undershirt will have No 10 Litmanen written on it next season.

Then there was the Johan Cruyff testimonial which, for over two years, had symbolised the acrimonious relationship between the former coach and club president Josep Lluis Nunez. The fixture, which should have been one of those irrelevant niceties that add spice to football, probably generated more ill feeling than any testimonial in the history of mankind. There were arguments about everything from ticket sales to playing strips and use of the club's shield. What's more, the game was used as a political platform by the people who whisper in Cruyff's ear that he can be to Barça what Franz Beckenbauer is to Bayern Munich.

Cruyff held the trump cards in terms of PR, as his friends within the sporting hierarchy of Catalan TV helped him organise the match and promote it as a tribute to the so-called Dream Team who won four League titles and the Champions Cup. The nice thing about nostalgia is that it prunes away all the bad bits, so Messrs Stoichkov, Laudrup and Zubizarreta, for example, said nothing about having left the club because they were fed up to the molars with a certain Mr Cruyff.

Barcelona beat the All-Star team 2-0, but in the press conference Van Gaal was unenthusiastic about the way contractual obligations had forced him to spend the evening sweating in the dug-out and his players sweating it out on the park. He earned himself a right royal roasting from Cruyff and his entourage. "The guy has no idea what it's all about," Cruyff proclaimed. Van Gaal was also slated for failing to shake hands with his predecessor, but explained: "I bumped into him at the hotel and he just gave me the cold shoulder. I didn't shake hands with him at the stadium because I'm not a hypocrite."

This brief résumé of the thousands of column inches dedicated to a testimonial cannot reflect the violence of the storm in this particular tea-cup. One Barcelona sports daily even ran the Oscar-parodying headline 'And The Loser Is Van Gaal'.

Louis, to his immense credit, has focused on keeping the team on course for the title. Toshack rightly mentions that it is becoming increasingly hard for coaches to concentrate on coaching. But, amid all attempts to distract him from the job in hand, Van Gaal might be excused for inverting Tosh's statement. "I'm only the coach. Please ask me about tactics."

Pro-file Claudio Lopez

Hot-shot 'Louse' making a name in Spain

VALENCIA legend Mario Kempes scored 116 goals in 184 games for the club between 1976 and 1984. Like Kempes, Claudio Lopez is a July baby from Argentina's Cordoba region, who moved to Spain at 22 and boasts a glorious left foot. But when Lopez joined Valencia in 1996 there were few bets on him emulating Kempes in the iconic stakes. Even his nickname suggested less heroic expectations. While Argentina's 1978 World Cup hero will for ever be the dashing 'Matador', Lopez can't shake off his long-time nickname, 'El Piojo', the Louse, a legacy of his scrawny stature as a schoolboy.

After Luis Aragones, Lopez's first coach at Valencia, resigned three months into the 1996-97 season, his successor, Jorge Valdano, promptly signed the player's compatriot Ariel Ortega as the team's go-to guy. The homesick Lopez was reduced to also-ran status, forced to play wide and ending the campaign with just three goals. By the summer of 1997 he was in the shop window.

Luckily for Valencia there were no takers, and when Valdano was sacked three games into last season, Lopez's fortunes finally changed for the better. The new man in charge at Mestalla was the Italian Claudio Ranieri, a coach who swears on the bible of counter-attack and made it clear that 'Piojo' – by consensus, the quickest player in Spanish football – was untouchable up front.

Argentina coach Daniel Passarella watched his progress with interest and handed him the role of partnering Gabriel Batistuta at France 98.

This season has seen 'Piojo' take centre-stage. Twenty-five goals in 35 League and Cup games is proof that the livewire Argentinian is no longer the lightning fast player who used to get his feet in a tangle in front of goal.

"I used to ask myself why I missed so many easy chances," he admits. "I've worked on keeping my pulse rate down and being aware of what's going on around me. Above all, I've learned to calm down before shooting, to give myself a split-second's thought before deciding which option to take. It seems to be working because now I'm on a roll."

He is, indeed. By mid-March, Lopez's goals had shot Valencia to second place in the League and into the Spanish Cup semi-finals.

"Claudio is a joy to work with," says Ranieri. "He's the whole team's reference at the moment." Kempes is a big fan, too. "Claudio is quicker than I was and more of a goal poacher. But he's unselfish, both when it comes to assists and his constant running."

Inevitably, his form is attracting interest from clubs around Europe, but understandably Valencia are not keen on letting him go. "We'll do everything we can to keep him here for years," insists club president Pedro Cortes, "but we know it's going to be a fight."

'Piojo' may be under contract until 2003, but Cortes knows Juventus, Fiorentina and Inter, among others, would willingly pay the estimated £14m to get this particular Louse out of Valencia's hair.

Jeff King

Fact file

Club Valencia (Spa)
Country Argentina
Born July 17, 1974, in Rio Tercero, Cordoba
Previous clubs Estudiantes, Racing Avellaneda
International caps 25
Honours Olympic silver medal 1996

Game over...injured Giovane Elber's goal power will be missed at the critical point in Bayern's campaigns

One sure, two likely, three possible

Keir Radnedge on Bayern Munich's hopes for the treble

GIOVANE ELBER and Oliver Kahn – for contrasting reasons – held the stage as Bayern Munich forged onward in pursuit of the dream treble.

Elber, the German League's top scorer, will be out for the rest of the season after damaging knee ligaments in a victory over Hamburg, while Kahn set a Bundesliga record when he completed an eighth successive match without conceding a goal.

Amid all this Bayern extended their lead at the top of the Bundesliga, reached the Cup Final and thrashed Kaiserslautern – significantly placed second in Germany – to reach the Champions League semi-finals.

Bayern's presence in the European last four means that the friendly rivalry between Franz Beckenbauer and Sir Bobby Charlton is about to stretch towards a new horizon. As players, they first clashed competitively and most famously in the 1966 World Cup Final; as respective and respected ambassadors for the football of Germany and England they contest the right to host the finals in 2006; at boardroom level they are ready to join battle in the Champions League.

But there is even more prestige at stake than would be provided by ultimate victory in Europe this term for either Bayern Munich, of whom Beckenbauer is president, or Manchester United, of whom Charlton is a director. A rare honour beckons – the prospect for both clubs of winning the elusive treble of European Cup and domestic League and Cup. Not even Real Madrid, in their heyday, achieved that. The exclusive club of treble-chancers has only three members: Celtic (1967), Ajax (1972) and PSV Eindhoven (1988).

United fans may fancy their chances but Bayern are even further down that particular road. They face Kyiv Dynamo – perhaps the least awkward option remaining – in the Champions League, head the Bundesliga by 14 points and will face a mediocre Werder Bremen in the domestic final.

Coach Ottmar Hitzfeld has demonstrated his faith in the club by extending his contract to 2003 while general manager Uli Hoeness is another who believes they can become the first from Germany to land the treble. Hoeness said: "I probably shouldn't be saying this but we do dream of winning everything. After all, our team is the best we've had for more than 20 years."

Hoeness was one of the key players alongside attacking sweeper Beckenbauer, unorthodox goalkeeper Sepp Maier, Maoist left-back Paul Breitner and marksman supreme Gerd Muller when Bayern last dominated at home and abroad back in the mid-1970s.

They won the European Champions Cup three times in a row from 1974, while domestic successes contributed to their proud record of more league (14) and cup (nine) triumphs than any other German club. On top of that, Bayern won the World Club Cup in 1976 and are one of only four clubs to have lifted all three European competitions (Ajax, Barcelona and Juventus are the others).

But neither they, nor any other German club, has landed the single-season treble.

The Bavarians, whose 1-0 home win over Werder Bremen was their eighth in a row without conceding a goal, have cowed the rest of Germany into submission. A winter-break poll of rivals' players and coaches produced a 90 per cent prediction that they would win the league. Nor is there any doubt in the mind of Alexander Ristic, coach of Second Division Rot-Weiss Oberhausen, whom Bayern beat 3-1 in their domestic cup semi-final.

He said: "I'm 100 per cent sure that Bayern will win both the championship and the German cup. They have everything: class players, strength in depth, experience, confidence and, above all, a winning mentality."

Those qualities are exemplified in players such as playmaker Stefan Effenberg and veteran sweeper Lothar Matthaus, though Elber, injured in a collision with Hamburg goalkeeper Hans-Jorg Butt, will be badly missed – most of all, perhaps, in Europe.

Effenberg, no longer the arrogant youth who was kicked out of the 1994 World Cup for a rude gesture to fans, has tried to sound a note of caution, saying: "It would be presumptuous to talk about winning the three titles so early." But then his guard dropped as he added: "On the other hand, we are playing extremely well going into the last stretch of the season..."

Champions Kaiserslautern, who need to hold on to second place to ensure a Champions League return next season, moved a further step towards that goal by defeating struggling Bochum 2-1, with the winner being conjured four minutes from time by former Manchester City striker Uwe Rosler.

At the other end of the table, a last-minute goal from midfielder Marcel Ketelaer enabled Borussia Monchengladbach to draw at Stuttgart and snatch a precious point in their fight to escape the apparently inevitable. It was a courageous fightback in all the depressing circumstances for a club who commanded so much respect and success in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Stuttgart went 2-0 ahead with goals from Hungarian midfielder Krisztian Lisztes and Bulgarian playmaker Krassimir Balakov but defender Michael Frontzeck pulled one back in the 67th minute to set up Monchengladbach's comeback. "It will be tough but we're not giving up," said coach Rainer Bonhof.

Simone seems sure to go

PSG striker set for Milan return. Andre Duclos reports

MARCO SIMONE now seems certain to be leaving Paris Saint Germain at the end of this season to go back to Milan, having so nearly left last summer.

Then, however, the club had a reasonable record, with participation in the Cup-winners Cup to come. Alas, we all know only too well what happened, which led to the unhappy Italian striker declaring that enough was enough. Alain Giresse was a sad failure as a manager, but PSG's choice of their former manager Artur Jorge, brought back from Holland, seemed strange; lightning, after all, does not strike twice. Nor, indeed, did it.

Jorge, who in his previous spell at PSG had fallen out so badly with George Weah, employed draconian methods on his return to Paris and made no secret of his contempt for the summer transfer policy pursued by his old journalistic enemy Charles Bietry, by then the president.

The town was not big enough for both of them and inevitably Bietry left,

Milan bound...Marco Simone

admitting he had made mistakes. As things got worse, PSG were humiliated by Maccabi Haifa in the UEFA Cup, so Jorge departed in his turn.

One slightly puzzling thing is that Simone so eagerly goes back to Milan, where his position and predicament could well be what it was in his previous spell there – a kind of reserve de luxe.

Weah is expected to leave San Siro, but Oliver Bierhoff surely is bound to stay while Andrii Shevchenko, Milan's likely summer signing from Kyiv Dynamo, is going to be, arguably, the finest centre-forward in the world. Where does Simone fit in – on the bench?

Bordeaux, after a deceptive home victory in the UEFA Cup over a weakened Parma, were humiliated 6-0 in the return. Despite their fine run in the championship, they plainly need much strengthening to survive in the Champions League – not least because influential attacking midfielder Johan Micoud, the oldest player in the team, seems likely to move, though there are hopes that the prolific Sylvain Wiltord will be persuaded to stay.

Ironically, Christophe Dugarry, who did well at Wembley against England as a second-half substitute, just as he had in 1997 in the Tournoi, was born in Bordeaux and cut his teeth with the local club. Spells with Milan and Barcelona were far less productive, but back on French soil with Marseille, things have been going nicely indeed.

The 27-year-old Dugarry has been scoring and making goals this season for a club who have done French football proud in Europe, eliminating Spain's surprise packet, Celta Vigo, in the quarter-finals without losing either game.

Last year, on the eve of the World Cup, he was a contentious figure. Should he be in the 22 for France? There were many who felt his record did not merit it. But Aime Jacquet, who knows him so well, decided to gamble and initially it seemed it would pay off. A bright start against modest South Africa augured well; then he was injured and did not come back until the Final, as a substitute. Now he says, "I'm simply happy." And the explanation is simple enough. At long last he's free from pain, free from injury in either leg, whereas not so long ago he was unable even to spring.

Rolland Courbis, the combative and outspoken manager of Marseille, who derided and downplayed France's World Cup win, admits that they used Dugarry too soon after his return from Spain to French football. But for Courbis, Dugarry's participation in the World Cup Final acted as a psychological boost. "He jumped a fence, and now he has a maturity he didn't have before."

Dugarry says: "I've changed, that is clear. The bad thing about being a footballer is that too much pressure is put on his shoulders. It is a difficult profession on the mental plane but I don't ask myself questions any more. I don't torture myself for days because I've missed a match."

He points out that at 27 he has been playing for 10 years and is "nearer the end than the beginning." But there does seem a great deal more to come.

Jean Tigana, forced out at Monaco, is now cultivating his vines. The former France midfielder, who might even have become national team manager, is concentrating on his impressive vineyards near Bordeaux, and recently added another seven hectares to an already broad domain. But will he resist the call to return to football, which must surely come?

Didier Deschamps seems increasingly likely to leave Juventus at the end of the season, despite no less a figure than the club's powerful patron, Gianni Agnelli, lauding him as captain. His contract has another two years to run after this season, but there is a get-out clause. The World Cup skipper could be going to Monaco or to Spain.

Pro-file Ze Roberto

Leverkusen's Brazilian with a mission

WAR of the wing-backs. Although on the best of terms with Roberto Carlos off the field, Bayer Leverkusen's in-form Ze Roberto is determined not to let friendship get in the way of his mission to overtake his illustrious compatriot in the national team pecking order.

Throughout his three-and-a-half years as a Brazilian international and during a short-lived spell at Real Madrid (January 1997 to January 1998), Ze Roberto has always had to play understudy to Roberto Carlos' principal boy. But now the worm could be turning.

Far from at his best at France 98 or for Real Madrid this season, Roberto Carlos needs to look over his shoulder – or rather at a TV screen showing a rampant Ze Roberto starring for leading Bundesliga side Bayer Leverkusen as they press hard for a Champions League qualifying place.

"Roberto Carlos and I are great mates," says Ze Roberto. "We hang around together when we're on international duty. But I'm very ambitious and deadly serious about becoming a starter for Brazil. Nobody wants to be a back-up for ever and I'm sure Roberto Carlos will respect my attitude. It will be an intense but friendly rivalry and, of course, neither of us can forget that there are other high-class Brazilians in our position, such as Felipe of Vasco da Gama.

"As I didn't play often for Real Madrid, I decided the best thing to do to protect my place in the World Cup squad was to return home early last year to play for Flamengo. But I still had a burning desire to make it in European football and was delighted when Leverkusen offered me a good contract. They are one of Germany's top clubs and with two Brazilians already there [Paulo Roberto Rink and Emerson], I thought settling in wouldn't be too difficult. So far it's turned out to be a great move. I'm playing well and the team is high in the table. I hope a successful period in the Bundesliga will help my international chances."

Many German eyebrows were raised last summer when Leverkusen paid Flamengo £4.2 million for Ze Roberto. Critics wondered why a club record fee had been paid for someone who had failed to come to terms with European football while at Real and who clocked up only three minutes playing time at France 98 – as a substitute against Denmark. It did not seem to matter that over the last decade, Bayer had wrung full value from Brazilian buys such as midfielder Tita, full-back Jorginho and attacker Paulo Sergio. Instead, the doubters chose to compare Ze Roberto with Rodrigo and Ramon, a pair of midfielders who arrived at the club from Brazil in the mid-80s and sank with all hands.

How wrong they were. Ze Roberto comfortably has been Leverkusen's player of the season, capturing the imagination of the public with his uncommon athleticism, electrifying bursts along the left flank and ability to hit perfect crosses. No wonder a poll of German professionals placed him second in the Best Bundesliga Player category – another Brazilian, Bayern Munich striker Giovane Elber, came first.

Not bad for the newcomer who was thought in many quarters to represent risky business.

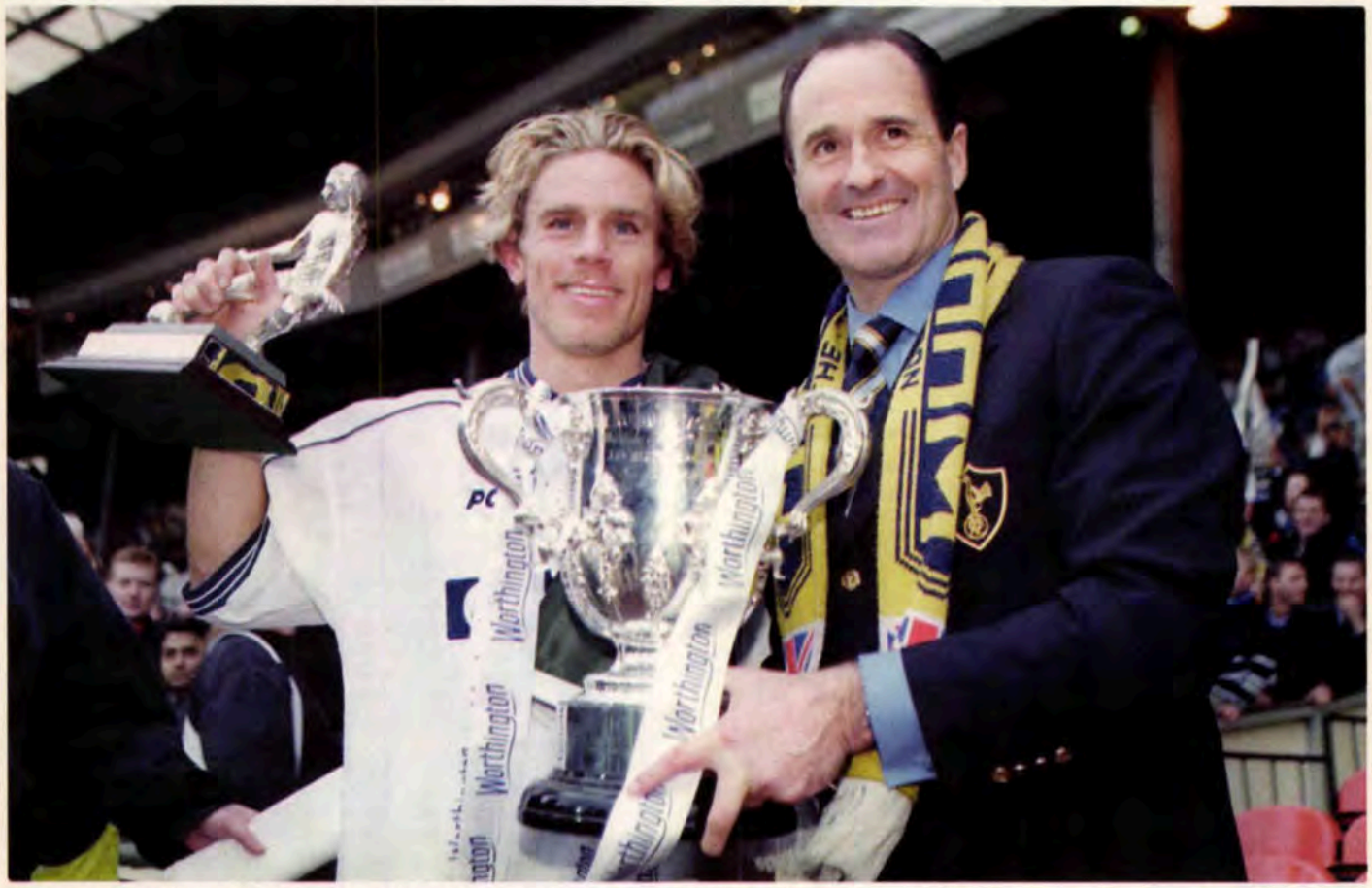
Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club Bayer Leverkusen
Country Brazil
Born July 6 1974 in Ipiranga
Previous clubs Pequeninos do Joque, Portuguesa, Real Madrid, Flamengo
International debut December 1995 v Colombia
International caps 16 (1 goal)
Honours: World Cup Runner-Up: 1998
Spanish Champion: 1997 (Real Madrid)
Brazilian Championship Runner-Up: 1996 (Portuguesa)

Spurs spring back

George Graham has sparked a revival at Tottenham, writes Gavin Hamilton



Winning smiles...Tottenham's goalscorer Allan Nielsen and manager George Graham celebrate their League Cup Final victory

GEORGE GRAHAM has wasted little time in turning around the fortunes of Tottenham Hotspur. The former Arsenal manager took an important step in his battle to win over fans who have been hugely sceptical about his appointment at White Hart Lane when Spurs beat Leicester to win the League Cup.

Danish midfielder Allan Nielsen scored in injury time to settle a poor Final at Wembley. Spurs were reduced to 10 men on the hour when Justin Edinburgh was sent off for punching Leicester's Robbie Savage. But Leicester failed to exploit this advantage and gave one of the most unadventurous displays seen at Wembley in recent years. Their cause was not helped by the fact that their main attacking threat, Emile Heskey, was clearly not fully fit.

The triumph in the League Cup, a competition dismissed by the likes of Manchester United and Arsenal as an irrelevance, looks set to reinvigorate a club whose rich tradition was in danger of being sacrificed in the annual battle against relegation. More importantly, Spurs have become the first English club to qualify for next season's revamped UEFA Cup.

Graham's success with Arsenal began with victory in the 1987 League Cup Final. Inevitably, comparisons are now going to be made with the side he built at Highbury, who won, among other things, two League titles, the FA Cup and the European Cup-winners Cup.

But, while at Arsenal Graham coached a side composed almost exclusively of Englishmen and with many home-grown youngsters – Tony Adams, Paul Merson, Michael Thomas, David Rocastle – at Tottenham he now has to deal with a cosmopolitan Premiership where English players often find themselves in a minority.

The Spurs team who beat Leicester at Wembley contained a Dane, a Norwegian, a German, an Irishman, a Swiss and a Frenchman. Furthermore, two of these players – David Ginola and Ramon Vega – as well as English team-mates Les Ferdinand and Justin Edinburgh were all expected to have been shown the door by Graham when he succeeded Christian Gross last autumn. Instead, they have been handed key roles by the new manager, who has made few forays into the transfer market. Other players, such as Darren Anderton and Steffen Iversen, have returned to action after overcoming long-term injuries that baffled the physios at Spurs.

Tottenham are on course for an unlikely Cup double after they were drawn to face Newcastle in the semi-finals of the FA Cup. A wonder goal by David Ginola, which drew comparisons with Ricky Villa's effort for Tottenham in the 1981 Final replay, secured the team's victory over Barnsley in the sixth round.

In the other semi-final, Arsenal face Manchester United, raising the delicious prospect of a north London derby in the Final for the first time. It would offer Graham the chance to gain revenge on the club who sacked him so ignominiously. Many believe that this was his primary motivation for joining Spurs.

The team Graham left to return to north London, Leeds United, have prospered under his former number two, David O'Leary. The team, who have an exciting crop of youngsters – Alan Smith, Jonathan Woodgate, Harry Kewell – are playing a more attacking game under O'Leary, and it is reaping rich rewards. Leeds have to be considered serious contenders for one of the three places in next season's expanded UEFA Champions League.

Chelsea, currently third in the League behind Man United and Arsenal, have all but conceded the title race, with player-manager Gianluca Vialli admitting that he should have brought in replacements for the injured Pierluigi Casiraghi and Gustavo Poyet, and Brian Laudrup, now back in Denmark.

Early pacesetters Aston Villa have experienced a dramatic decline, winning only one League game since the New Year and slipping out of contention for the Champions League places.

At the bottom of the table, Nottingham Forest look doomed, while the remaining relegation spots will be filled by two from Charlton, Southampton, Blackburn, Coventry, Everton and, if they're not careful, Leicester.

There were few surprises in Kevin Keegan's first squad as England manager, for the Euro 2000 qualifier against Poland. There was a recall for Blackburn's Chris Sutton, who famously refused to play for Glenn Hoddle, and call-ups for Arsenal's Ray Parlour and Tottenham's Tim Sherwood. Keegan used the squad get-together before the game to force Robbie Fowler and Graeme Le Saux to kiss and make up (though not literally) after their recent unsavoury dispute.

SCOTLAND

Beware the mystery man!

THE MURKY underworld of Balkan politics has now infiltrated Scottish football in the shape of Serbian businessman Giovanni Di Stefano, who is trying to take a controlling interest in troubled Dundee.

As reported in last month's *World Soccer*, the club are facing expulsion from the Premier League due to the fact that their stadium does not meet the required standards, leading to rumours of a possible merger with Dundee United.

Such rumours now have been overtaken by the emergence of Di Stefano, who claims to be personally involved with such figures as Saddam Hussein and Gerry Adams. This has led to some wariness being expressed by those close to the club. Their bankers, the Royal Bank of Scotland, are unwilling to retain their business connection should the takeover proceed.

This has deflected attention from the chase for the Premier League title, with Celtic's hopes boosted by Rangers' surprise home defeat by Dundee United.

Henrik Larsson's incredible scoring form has continued for the Parkhead side, and he is attracting attention from several English Premiership clubs. However, the Swede is believed to be on the verge of signing a three-year extension to his present deal which will make him the highest-paid player in Celtic's history.

Rangers also are providing for the future. As well as earmarking funds for a long-awaited training centre, they have ensured that Dutch striker Michael Mols will join them from Utrecht in the summer.

Another Dutchman, Giovanni Van Bronckhorst, has had an exceptionally successful time since arriving at Rangers from Feyenoord last July. He 'sold' the benefits of life at Ibrox to Mols, even though he has been critical of the comparatively poor training facilities.

At the other end of the table, a slump by Hearts, last season's Scottish Cup winners, has taken them down to bottom place, with relegation a real possibility.

Still on form...Celtic's Henrik Larsson

Edinburgh neighbours Hibernian are having a rather more successful time, and are poised to clinch promotion to the Premier League well before the season ends.

Alan Fairley

N IRELAND

Glens lose their grip

GLENTORAN are finding things tough as they approach the last stages of a season in which they had high hopes of a Double. Three successive defeats, including a 2-1 setback at Cliftonville in the sixth round of the Cup, have shown the team in a different light.

Glentoran could have had the League race virtually settled with six games remaining, but lost 2-1 to Linfield after being in front with only 24 minutes left. The match was marred by crowd violence after Linfield's equaliser.

Five days later Glentoran were beaten again, 1-0 away to Newry Town, who are seeking a European place for the first time.

Now Linfield have the hopes of a Double. They face Cliftonville in one Cup semi-final, with Portadown meeting Ballymena United in the other.

Coleraine, in debt and facing a £200,000 bill to bring their stadium up to safety standards, appear to have been saved. A new board have promised to keep the club going and implement an improved youth development scheme.

Roy Kitson

WALES

Barry on the verge

BARRY TOWN need only eight points from their last six games, and seem certain to take the League title for the fourth successive year. However, they have been made to fight for every point this season as the standard of the League continues to grow.

Inter CableTel occupy second spot after a run of 14 matches unbeaten and will face Barry in the semi-final of the Gilbert League Cup.

The two clubs also meet in the Welsh Cup semis, having eliminated Connah's Quay Nomads 3-1 in a replay and Total Network Solutions 2-1 respectively.

The winners will meet either Carmarthen Town, who edged through 1-0 against Second Division South club Port Talbot Athletic, or Conwy United, taken to a replay by Third Division South's Ammanford after a 0-0 draw. Conwy eventually won by the only goal.

The relegation battle seems to be between five clubs – Holywell Town, Rhayader Town, Rhyl, Afan Lido and Connah's Quay Nomads.

With only one club going down this year, as the League switches to 18 clubs for next season, Holywell Town are under most threat of the drop. They are adrift at the bottom and four of their last six games are away.

Mel Ap Ior Thomas

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Goal-getter to Glasgow...Rangers new boy Michael Mols

Top three searching for talent

HOLLAND

FOR THE past few months Ajax, Feyenoord and PSV have been fighting each other on the domestic transfer market. With so many top players going abroad and severe complaints about second-class foreign replacements, Holland's top three have sought to strengthen their squads with talent from mid-table clubs.

The biggest target was Michael Mols, the FC Utrecht international striker. He took a long time to make a decision, mainly because of the huge admiration of the Utrecht supporters, who tried to persuade him to stay. His former club Ajax, where Mols was part of the youth scheme, looked to be the strongest contenders to sign him. But the striker has opted to join Scottish Premier League leaders Rangers.

FC Twente wing-back Niels Oude Kamphuis also caught the eye of Ajax and PSV, but will join German club Schalke, where fellow Dutchmen Huub Stevens, Youri Mulder, Johan De Kock and Marco Van Hoogdalern are in action.

Then the big three were interested in Mark Van Bommel, the Fortuna Sittard libero. He is only 21 but has vast First Division experience. Again Ajax had chances to sign the player, but Van Bommel will switch to PSV next season, saying he feels that he would fit in better there. Meanwhile, PSV also signed Yugoslav international Ivica Kralj, the former Porto goalkeeper, on the advice of future coach Eric Gerets.

Eventually, Ajax *did* sign a new player, Ferdi Vierklau, the international defender who went from Vitesse to Tenerife during the summer of 1997 but who has not played for some weeks due to a dispute with the board. Vierklau claims Tenerife still owe him his wages for a couple of months.

Feyenoord also made a signing – Heerenveen midfielder Jan De Visser.

Rob Witschge has decided to end his career. After a short and unsuccessful spell at Saudi Arabian club Al Ittihad, he returned to Holland only to find that no clubs were interested in him. Witschge, now 32, played for Ajax, Saint-Etienne, Feyenoord and Utrecht. He won the Cup-winners Cup in 1987 with Ajax, several domestic honours, and 32 caps. He was a member of the 1992 European Championship squad (as a replacement for younger brother Richard), and made the USA 94 party.

The national Cup has reached the semi-final stages with few surprises. PSV will play Fortuna Sittard; Feyenoord will meet either FC Zwolle or Ajax.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

PORTUGAL

Souness on the ropes

GRAEME SOUNESS is in grave danger of losing his job as coach of Benfica, even though the club still have a chance of winning the championship.

With eight games to go, Porto led on 59 points, with Boavista second on 56 and Benfica third on 53.

Boavista are still widely regarded as a second-rate club, despite their successes this season, and their 3-0 victory at the Stadium of Light led to an anti-Souness demonstration by thousands of Benfica fans.

Souness finally left by a back door, with a police escort, to plot his strategy for the following match. This was an improvement, a 1-1 draw away to Uniao de Leiria, but Porto widened the gap at the top to six points by winning 3-1 at Salgueiros.

Time must be running out for Souness. He still defends his policy of buying British players, and points out that he can afford only what the club's massive debts will allow. But his latest imports, Gary Charles from Aston Villa and Steve Harkness from Liverpool, have not brought much improvement.

Benfica have won the championship 30 times, Porto 17 – including the last four – and Sporting 16. Belenenses are the only other team to have won the title, in 1946, and many neutrals would like to see the League go to Boavista, if only because they are not one of the Big Three.

They were formed in 1903, from the amalgamation of two English-dominated clubs, Valo Club do Porto (1892) and Oporto Cricket Club (1893). Their ground, Campo Alegre, was popularly known as Englishman's Field.

Then a third English club emerged, in the same area of Oporto, founded by workers at a factory making thread. They took the name Boavista and became big enough to take over the other two clubs. And this year may be their year, at last.

Alberto da Silva

Set to go...Benfica's Graeme Souness

AUSTRIA

Greens go for title

THE SECOND half of the season has brought about a change of fortune in the League, with both Graz clubs slipping after 18 months of unparalleled success at the top.

Rapid are now on equal terms with Sturm and six points ahead of Grazer AK following their expected victory over lowly Lustenau.

Heri Weber's 'Greens' have not been in exceptional form, but his winning formula is in the Rapid tradition of obtaining results. Defensively, Rapid are sound, Martin Braun and Oliver Freund exuding reliability, but up front more accuracy is required of former Guetersloh forward Angelo Vier.

Across town, FK Austria continue to toil in mid-table, and the 3-1 victory over bottom-placed Steyr, which may well have sent Vorwarts to Division Two, probably is not enough to ease the 'Violets' into a UEFA Cup place.

LASK have a better chance of getting into Europe after their second win of the spring, albeit a narrow one over Ried. The Upper Austrians are fourth.

Bob Vaughan

BELGIUM

Van Meir joins No More Caps club

ERIC VAN MEIR created quite a stir when he joined the growing list of players pledging not to play any more internationals while Georges Leekens remains in charge of the national team.

Enzo Scifo, Luc Nilis and Philippe Albert – who is hardly ever selected these days anyway – already had promised to reject further invitations from Leekens.

Van Meir, who never seems to play as well for Belgium as he does for Lierse, stated his intention after his surprise omission from the squad for home friendlies against Bulgaria and Egypt.

"I don't feel very respected by Leekens," said the player, who then was quoted as having added: "He would pick Gordan Vidovic even if he had only one leg."

Van Meir was adamant that he had said no such thing about the Mouscron defender, and phoned him to apologise.

Even though Van Meir is 31 and has been playing mainly at the back, his 12 goals for Lierse make him the sixth highest scorer in Belgian football this season. He is in form and by Belgium's geriatric standards he could have expected several more caps.

The absence through suspension of veteran Franky Van der Elst was used by Club Brugge as an explanation for their 5-2 defeat by Lierse, who then thrashed St Truiden 6-0. With Van der Elst back, Brugge made up lost ground on Genk in the title race, only to be beaten by Standard.

Brugge were hoping that Ghanaian Eric Addo would fill Van der Elst's

holding role in midfield, but now rumour has it that Gerets might take Addo with him to PSV in the summer.

RWD Molenbeek, whose bid to regain their place in the First Division has foundered recently, are hoping their new partnership with Feyenoord will not only be more successful than Antwerp's deal with Manchester United, but also will signal a change of fortunes.

Financial support from Feyenoord means that Molenbeek could afford to admit supporters for just £1.60 against Herentals. A bigger-than-usual crowd of 3,600 saw them win 4-1.

Nicholas Harling

Out of contention...Eric Van Meir

LUXEMBOURG
Jeunesse take over

THE LEAD in the League has changed hands yet again, with Jeunesse Esch going top after beating FC Wiltz 2-1.

Dudelange dropped to second, despite remaining unbeaten.

At the bottom, CS Petange won for only the third time this season, 3-0 against Sporting Mertzig, while Spora's long stay in the top flight looks all but over after their 2-0 defeat by Grevenmacher.

The national team put on a good display against Iceland and led with a rare goal by Marcel Christophe, but lost after conceding twice late on.

Sporting Mertzig's Mikhail Zaritski, a Russian who has taken out Luxembourg citizenship, won his first cap.

Tim Brice

SWITZERLAND
Gress needs a keeper

ON THE international front the vexed question has been raised about whether coach Gilbert Gress can find a consistently secure keeper.

In the 12 years since Daniel Jeandupeux ran the show, Switzerland have used eight keepers – all of them still active: Luzern's Stephan Lehmann (14 caps), Nottingham Forest's Marco Pascolo (45 caps – nicknamed Flopolo), Lausanne's Martin Brunner (33 caps), Grasshopper's Pascal Zuberbuhler (five) and Philipp Walker (11), Neuchatel Xamax's Joel Corminboeuf (eight), Nurnberg reserve Andreas Hilfiker (seven) and Basel's Stefan Huber (11).

Gress was irritated by the 4-2 defeat by Austria in a friendly, though none of the goals could be laid at Hilfiker's door. Instead, it was the defensive system as a whole that came under scrutiny.

"We use the easiest system possible," says Gress. "You get the ball, pass it and move into space. Is that really too difficult for the world to understand?

"What we need most of all is more confidence. That will help all the players and then we can worry about other problems – such as the goalkeeping situation. For example, Hilfiker and Pascolo have never let me down but they are not playing first-team football – and you cannot go into an international competition with a rusty keeper."

In the League, Servette increased their lead at the top by winning 1-0 at Grasshopper, their closest challengers. The scorer, Alexandre Rey, is the only marksman to have reached double figures in the League this season.

Lausanne moved up into second place thanks to a 4-0 home win over injury-hit Neuchatel Xamax.

Keir Radnedge

REP IRELAND
Kilkenny KO'd

FOR THE first time in the 77-year history of the FAI Cup, a team failed to complete a fixture. Finn Harps got a walkover to the semi-finals after Kilkenny City refused to travel to Ballybofey for their quarter-final replay. Kilkenny had only 11 fit players, two of them keepers. In addition, Michael Reddy was on duty for the national Under-18s the same night.

Finn Harps should now qualify for their first Final since 1974, even though they have been drawn away to First Division Galway United. Shelbourne must also be fancied to go through, for what would be their fifth Final in a row. The Reds are at home to struggling Bray Wanderers.

The League title could be decided on April 16 when the top two, Cork and St Patrick's, meet in Dublin.

Foreign Affairs minister David Andrews has suggested that the FAI's proposed new stadium in Dublin should host group games if England get to stage the 2006 World Cup.

Home Farm's partnership with Everton will end this season. The link-up failed to provide the English Premiership club with sufficient talent.

● Peter Farrell, the former Everton captain, died on March 16, aged 76. He played in three FAI Cup Finals for Shamrock Rovers before joining Everton in 1946, gaining 28 caps for the Republic ans seven for Northern Ireland.

Sean Creedon

Pro-file Jan Koller

Lokeren's giant Czech goal machine

BITING the hand that feeds him has enabled Belgium-based Czech Republic striker Jan Koller to make the perfect start to his international career.

The scorer of goals galore this season for Lokeren – 17 from 26 starts by mid-March – Koller coincidentally won his first cap in a friendly against Belgium in February and, surprise, surprise, he emerged as the enemy within, popping up with the winner.

"It wasn't a case of horses for courses, of picking Jan Koller because he was close at hand or has a good knowledge of Belgian football," said Czech national coach Jozef Chovanec. "He has been scoring goal upon goal in Belgium and deserved his chance to show what he can do at this level.

"The friendly date gave me the chance to experiment, to review my options, and Jan would have played whoever the opposition."

A meaty reminder that hulking, physically intimidating target men are not yet an extinct breed on the continent, the 6ft 6in Koller certainly performed well enough against the Belgians to warrant further opportunities to lead the Czech front line in the future.

Koller, 26, side-footed home the only goal 20 minutes from time but that was not his sole contribution. Despite the icy conditions not favouring a man of his bulk and the fact that he was far from overloaded with service, Koller gave a good all-round account of himself. As usual, he won virtually everything in the air, but he also looked the part when holding the ball up, and never shirked from closing down defenders.

Belgian central defender Gordan Vidovic remarked a few days before the game that he would not lose any sleep over the prospect of slugging it out with the big Czech. Ninety minutes spent coming off second-best to Koller would surely have resulted in a revised opinion.

In recent times, the Czechs have experienced some difficulties in finding the best foil up front for the skilful and mobile Vladimir Smicer. Euro 96 striker Pavel Kuka of Nurnberg is arguably past his prime, while neither of the Sparta Prague strikers, Vratislav Lokvenc, and Horst Siegl, has particularly convinced as international material. Perhaps the Little and Large combination of Smicer and Koller is the answer.

"Even though it makes me a marked man in Belgium, it was tremendous to score the winner on my international debut," said Koller. "I couldn't have asked for a better first game. I hope it's a good omen."

Koller, who joined Lokeren from Sparta Prague in summer 1996, has never had any cause to feel homesick. After all, Lokeren have three other Czechs, defender Martin Penicka and midfielders Roman Vonasek and Vaclav Budka.

"Naturally, it helps having friends and compatriots with you when you move abroad," says Koller. "But we aren't a Czech clique at Lokeren. The strength of this club is our togetherness. Nationalities don't come into it."

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club Lokeren (Blg)
Country Czech Republic
Born March 30, 1973, in Lhota
Previous clubs Smetanova Lhota, Milevsko, Sparta Prague
International debut February 1999, v Belgium
International caps 1 (1 goal)
Honours Czech League 1995 (Sparta); Czech Cup 1996 (Sparta)

Under pressure...Laudrup was given a torrid time by fans of his old club, Brondby

Not such a quiet life for Laudrup

DENMARK

FC COPENHAGEN has not been the quiet backwater Brian Laudrup had perhaps dreamed of when he returned to the Danish League from Chelsea last autumn. The vagaries of the fixture list meant that his first match was away to Copenhagen's fiercest rivals, Brondby, whom Laudrup played for before spending a decade abroad in Germany, Italy, Scotland and England.

An 18,000 capacity crowd packed Brondby Stadion for the top-of-the-table clash, which ushered in the second half of the season after the winter break. Laudrup was given a hostile reception by the home fans, who jeered his every touch of the ball, and Brondby made sure it was an unhappy start with a dramatic 3-2 victory that lifted them above FC Copenhagen into second place in the Superliga, behind AB.

Laudrup's only real contribution in a fitful performance was to earn a second-half penalty, but it was not enough to stave off defeat. Afterwards, he played down the animosity, saying: "I was very pleased to play in front of so many people. I think I played well but I'm not happy when we lose. I play to win."

Laudrup moved back to Denmark from England pleading homesickness after years on the road. He also quit the international stage, but there is likely to be little peace on the pitch for him. His return has energised the domestic game, where attendances had fallen by a worrying 12 per cent in the first half of the season.

Every paper and magazine has been focusing on Laudrup. Will he be a hit? Will he flop? The pressure is everywhere, and at home in Denmark he is the only superstar, not one among many, as was the case in his years abroad.

Although the life and strife of Brian hogs the headlines, there are other elements on which to focus. For one, former national team boss Sepp Piontek is entering his final few months as a coach with Silkeborg before retiring in the summer. His best hope of leaving in glory is the Cup, in which Silkeborg have reached the semi-finals.

This year also is the last of Ebbe Skovdahl's excellent reign as coach of Brondby, who he has guided to four championships and three Cups in his three spells in charge.

Midfielder John 'Faxe' Jensen also finished his distinguished playing career at Brondby and has now moved into coaching at Herfolge.

Jim Holden

SWEDEN

Soderberg does not want Zetterberg

PAR ZETTERBERG is in danger of becoming yesterday's man in Sweden. Although he is a star midfielder in the Belgian League with Anderlecht, Zetterberg is clearly unhappy with his standing in national coach Tommy Soderberg's plans.

Soderberg feels he has a surplus of creative midfielders, with youngsters such as Arsenal's Freddie Ljungberg and Bari's Daniel Andersson pushing their claims.

Zetterberg's fortunes sharply contrast with those of Celtic's Henrik Larsson. In 1997, 'King Par' was Sweden's Player of the Year while Larsson was struggling. Today, Larsson is Sweden's No 1 and an automatic choice for Soderberg, while Zetterberg could be on his way out.

Former national team goalkeeper Thomas Ravelli announced his retirement – only to start training with his former club, Osters, within a week.

Osters, relegated last season, sold one keeper, Pal Lundin, to Oxford United, and another, Claes Green, has been injured. Ravelli says he intends to play until Green is fit again, but who knows?

Pentti Hietanen

FINLAND

Tintin on goal trail

NATIONAL manager Richard Moller Nielsen has been impressed by the form of Rangers striker Jonatan Johansson, and since Finland's more experienced goal-getters have been struggling with injuries or loss of form, the 23-year-old has been a single ray of light.

His equaliser against Poland was his third goal in his last four matches for Finland. Johansson, once with TPS and known as Tintin because of his resemblance to the cartoon character, has also scored 16 times for Rangers this season.

Pentti Hietanen

ICELAND

Useful, if not pretty

ICELAND'S hard-earned 2-1 win over Luxembourg was not pretty to watch, but it provided coach Gudjon Thordarson with a chance to review his ring-rusty troops before their Euro 2000 double-header against Andorra and Ukraine.

The team, who haven't played since October's 1-0 win over Russia in Reykjavik, fell behind to a goal by Marcel Christophe, but Leicester's Arnar Gunnlaugsson equalised from the penalty-spot, with Stabæk midfielder Helgi Sigurdsson scoring the winner.

Pjetur Jonatansson is to be an assistant referee at the Under-20 World Youth Cup, the most senior position ever awarded to an Icelandic match official.

Rab Christie

NORWAY

Brann ready to make an impact

NEVER BEFORE have so many Norwegian clubs gone abroad in order to be fully prepared for a new season. During the three months before kick-off in April, the 14 clubs in the elite division spent 41 weeks abroad. Brann Bergen alone spent seven weeks in Spain and Germany.

The Norwegian Football Federation has bought shares in Spain's La Manga Club training centre. As well as training there, clubs take part in competitions in which teams from other Scandinavian countries also play.

New-look Brann could make a strong challenge this season. Swedish goalkeeper Magnus Kihlstedt, signed from Lillestrom, has done well in pre-season, while Harri Ylonen, a Finnish international with 19 caps, will strengthen the defence. Up front, Mika Kottila from HJK Helsinki looks a bargain. His physique and strength in the air should threaten most defences.

Lars Bohinen, out of the national squad for two years, was selected again for the European qualifier against Greece. His form with Derby County has been good and he is more consistent. Frank Strandli also has found his old form. After a frustrating period with Panathinaikos, he joined Aalborg in Denmark and has fitted in well.

Sigurd Odegaard

TURKEY

Feldkamp back in business at 64

GERMAN coach Karl-Heinz Feldkamp is back in Turkey at the age of 64 – with just enough time to help his new club upset his old one. He has taken over at Besiktas on an 18-month contract and is the club's 37th coach and their third German, following Horst Buchtz (1975) and Christoph Daum (1993-96).

Feldkamp's previous job in Turkey was with Galatasaray, who had a wonderful season under his control in 1992-93, winning the League and Cup double, the Sports Writers Cup and the President's Cup, as well as making a little history in the UEFA Cup.

They got through two rounds, in the process becoming the first Turkish team to knock out a German club (Eintracht Frankfurt, 1-0 on aggregate) and the first to beat an Italian club (Roma, 3-2 on aggregate).

The season ended on a contentious note, when the FA held an investigation into Galatasaray's 8-0 away win over Ankaragucu in their last match – which gave them the title on goal difference.

Feldkamp left shortly afterwards, saying that he was tired of the pressures of the job, but now he is back, ironically with the club who finished runners-up in both the League and the Cup six years

ago. With nine games to go, Besiktas are second, three points behind Gala – and the pair will meet again in another Cup Final. "I can't promise anything, I'm not a magician," said Feldkamp. "I don't even expect good football. What's important is that we win."

Feldkamp took over from John Toshack. His one success, in last season's Turkish Cup, was not enough, and European defeat by little-known Valerenga made his survival impossible. In general he was liked by the fans, but his direct manner did not make him many friends with officialdom. He was glad to return to Real Madrid, who have paid Besiktas £375,000 compensation.

Galatasaray may go into the Cup Final without striker Hasan Sas, who failed a drugs test after the first leg of the club's semi-final win over Sakaryaspor. If he fails a second test he will be suspended for up to a year.

Hasan Cemali

Back for more...Karl-Heinz Feldkamp

GREECE

Olympiakos hopes blown away

THE CHANCE was there for Olympiakos Piraeus to reach the semi-finals of the Champions Cup for the first time, but then it was gone with the wind.

Sinisa Gogic's header against Juventus put them in sight of their dream, but a sudden brisk wind in the cold Olympic Stadium in Athens fooled goalkeeper Dimitris Eleftheropoulos, who went out too far when Alessandro Birindelli crossed, enabling Antonio Conte to equalise with just five minutes left. The resulting 1-1 draw pushed the Italian club through 3-2 on aggregate.

Olympiakos coach Dusan Bajevic said: "We made one error, which was costly. We deserved victory, but had no luck."

Athens daily newspaper *Ta Nea* reported that the professional teams in Greece have total debts of £55million, accumulated over 20 years.

By law, most of the clubs should have been shut down by the state because their debts have greatly surpassed their capital. For years, however, Greek governments have been helping the clubs by ignoring their financial problems.

Last season 12 of the 18 teams in the First Division recorded losses totalling £12.5m – nearly three-quarters of the total being incurred by the Big Three, AEK, Olympiakos and Panathinaikos.

Lou Economopoulos

ISRAEL

Hapoel Haifa roll on

HAPOEL HAIFA continue to hurtle towards their first national title, as they stay ahead of Maccabi Tel Aviv, Betar Jerusalem and Maccabi Haifa.

In February, Hapoel beat Maccabi 1-0 in the Haifa derby in the biggest game ever seen in Israel's northern port city.

Maccabi Haifa lost momentum after the mid-season break. After selling prolific international striker Alon Mizrahi to Nice, Czech coach Dusan Uhrin failed to find a winning combination and his side's title aspirations slipped away, as did their hopes of advancing even further in the Cup-winners Cup when they were beaten 4-0 on aggregate by Lokomotiv Moscow in the quarter-finals.

Ori Lewis

ALBANIA

Partizani in trouble

PARTIZANI TIRANA, one of the country's top clubs, are deep in trouble and facing relegation. The 15 times champions and 14 times Cup-winners have never had good support. Although the Ministry of Defence owns part of the club, and remains as an 'umbrella' in times of difficulty, co-partners Abaco, an Italian company, are beset by problems and have not been able to contribute.

Now Neptun Bajko, technical director of the national squad for the past four years, has been appointed the club's chief executive. He seems sure to turn to another well-known personality, Albert Xhani, for help. Xhani has declared an interest in taking over Partizani, and is willing to put up some £70,000 – a large sum in Albania.

Gezim Nushi

MALTA

Valletta close in again

VALLETTA's relentless march towards a third straight title goes on. Their 3-1 defeat of Floriana put them seven points clear with seven games left. New Bulgarian coach Krassimir Manolov, a former Valletta player, seems to have added that vital extra element to his side.

Hamrun Spartans are set for the drop, with St Patrick battling it out with Pieta Hotspurs to join them. Currently, they are separated by a single point.

Domenico Aquilina

Pro-file Elvir Baljic

Bosnian goal poacher in Turkish title fight

FENERBAHCE expects. More than any other Fener star, Bosnian sharpshooter Elvir Baljic is the man to whom their fans will be looking to lead an onwards and upwards charge as the Turkish title race reaches its climax.

Bought from provincial side Bursaspor last summer for a cool £8million, Baljic has certainly not wilted under the expectations generated by such a price-tag. Indeed, he figures among the country's top scorers this season thanks to 13 goals in 24 starts. But more of the same is a must if Fener are to make up ground lost when they fell 2-0 at table-topping rivals Galatasaray in early March.

Baljic holds the key to his club's dream of a perfect 1998-99 – their first championship since 1996, which in turn would sabotage Galatasaray's bid for a hat-trick of titles.

Until he moved to Paris Saint-Germain after the World Cup, the virtuoso Nigerian playmaker Jay-Jay Okocha was the undisputed idol of the Fenerbahce fans, so much so that the intense admiration he inspired developed into a two-year phenomenon known as 'Okochamania'. Now the mantle of standard-bearer has passed to Baljic, though it is there that the comparisons end. While Okocha is the consummate showman, equally at ease in a television studio as performing to the stadium gallery, Baljic has a humbler modus operandi. No airs, no graces, just expert finishing.

"Elvir is one of those natural poachers of goals," says Fenerbahce's German coach Joachim Low. "Good instincts guide him to the right place at the right time in the box and before you know it, the ball is in the net. I've heard him called selfish, but show me a striker who isn't. He has total confidence in his ability to put away chances."

These days, there are few hiding places for Baljic, either on or off the pitch. Markers dog his tracks during games, while he is fêted everywhere he goes in the club's heartland, the Kadikoy district of Istanbul. But in stark contrast, the most important moment of his career was conducted far from the public gaze.

After impressing for Sarajevo in a friendly against Bursaspor in the spring of 1995, Baljic and the Turkish club hoped to strike a deal. The Bosnian government, however, were unwilling to sanction the move and Baljic turned to cloak and dagger means to escape his war-torn homeland.

An opportunity came a few weeks later. With Sarajevo on a stopover in Turkey on their way to a tournament in Saudi Arabia, Baljic crept out of the team's hotel to a rendezvous with Bursaspor's Bosnian coach Nejat Biyedic.

The Bosnian authorities eventually forgave him and he has been a regular for his country since they began competing as an independent nation in 1996. Not that the international arena has proved a happy hunting ground. He needed 10 games to register his first goal and was sent off in a Euro 2000 defeat by Lithuania.

Turkish delight for his club, bitter fruit with the national team.

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club Fenerbahce (Tur)
Country Bosnia
Born July 8, 1974, in Sarajevo
Previous clubs Sarajevo, Bursaspor (Tur)
International debut September 1996, v Greece
International caps 13 (2 gls)

Lazio looming...Lokomotiv beat Maccabi Haifa in the Cup-winners Cup quarter-finals

Lokomotiv steaming ahead in Europe

RUSSIA

LOKOMOTIV MOSCOW advanced to the Cup-winners Cup semi-finals for the second season running after defeating Maccabi Haifa of Israel. However, Lazio look like too big an obstacle for the 'railroad workers' team.

The club, sponsored by the Russian Ministry of Railways, had been the fifth team in Moscow – behind Spartak, Dynamo, CSKA and Torpedo – but have greatly improved under Yuri Syomin's leadership.

Last year, Lokomotiv finished third in the League behind Spartak and CSKA, and lost to Stuttgart in the Cup-winners Cup semi-finals.

Goalkeeper Ruslan Nigmatullin, experienced national team libero Igor Tchugainov, new midfielder Alexei Smertin and Georgian international Zaza Dzanashiya make up the backbone of the team. Dzanashiya, a prolific striker, scored a hat-trick in Lokomotiv's home leg of their Cup-winners Cup quarter-final against Maccabi.

"Dzanashiya is very good, but Moscow fans must thank us for bringing the world's best striker to town," Syomin smiled when asked about Lokomotiv's chances against the Italians. He meant Lazio's Christian Vieri, but many observers believe Lokomotiv are capable of at least one draw from the two games against Lazio.

Largely thanks to the team's recent success in the European club competitions, the Lokomotiv ground has become one of the Russia's most important. When a terrorist bomb explosion in Vladikavkaz, just 50 kilometres away from Chechnya, made it impossible to play the European championship qualifier against Andorra there, the game was moved to the 30,000-seat Lokomotiv arena.

Victor Gusev

UKRAINE

Kyiv on course

AS THE season got under way after the winter break, there appeared to be few surprises in store. Kyiv Dynamo are the clear favourites for the title and, as mentioned last month, used their financial resources before the restart to strengthen their squad, buying three promising Russian youngsters.

Shakhtar Donetsk are the only club who can rival Kyiv from a financial point of view. They made the two biggest buys during the break, signing up Ukraine internationals Volodymyr Mykitin, a defender, from Karpaty, and forward Serhiy Nagorniyak from Dnipro.

Shakhtar also stand the best chance of matching Dynamo in the League. As the season resumed, they stood only three points off the top and may be able to take advantage of Dynamo's continuing involvement in the Champions League and the fact that many of their stars will be involved in Euro 2000 qualifiers.

Karpaty, lying third in the table, are in big trouble. Two weeks before the restart, their entire backroom staff resigned because of persistent delays in payment. The financial crisis also prevented the club from buying any new players to sustain their bid for a UEFA Cup place.

One of the oldest Ukrainian clubs, Mykolaiv, are also in financial trouble. The team, promoted last season, could not even afford the modest £4,500 fee necessary to compete in the second half of the championship, and were unable to pay a debt of £67,000 to Shakhtar for the use of four players. Only help from their city council and an agreement from Shakhtar that repayment could be postponed allowed Mykolaiv to continue.

Oleg Zadernovsky

YUGOSLAVIA

Partizan favourites to take the title

THE 112th derby between Red Star and Partizan Belgrade, traditionally the season's main event, produced a 2-2 draw which was watched by 40,000 spectators.

Unfortunately, the match was overshadowed by violent incidents, and more than 30 hooligans were injured in pre-match fights.

Partizan's young side are still the favourites to win the championship. If the club succeed in keeping this team together – a genuine rarity in the current climate – there would be potential for a credible challenge to qualify for the Champions League.

Title-holders Obilic, the sole challengers to Partizan, set a Yugoslavian record by going unbeaten for 46 League games. This is a notable feat, but it says a lot about the quality of the domestic league.

Vladimir Novak

BULGARIA

Dark days for Dimitrov

ONLY a win in Luxembourg City would leave a so-far largely disappointing national team with any slight hope of qualifying for the European Championship next summer.

Coach Dimitar Dimitrov did without almost all the veterans in the friendly with Slovakia in Stara Zagora, which surprisingly attracted over 30,000 spectators. Six substitutes featured in the 2-1 win, but whether much was learned is doubtful.

If the points are brought back from the Grand Duchy, one or two of the old stars may be recalled for a last hurrah against England. That game may prove irrelevant, however, if the match four days earlier with Poland is lost. Such a result would raise the question about whether Dimitrov should stay.

CSKA currently lurk in the middle of the table after a 3-2 home reverse to Levski, who remain close behind Liteks at the top. Only Levski Kjustendil have a realistic chance of catching either.

At the bottom, Lok Plovdiv and Septemvri, last season's Second Division champions, are in the greatest danger.

Bob Vaughan

CZECH REPUBLIC

Scorers are in short supply

BACK-TO-BACK ties with Lithuania in Teplice and Scotland at Parkhead will have given coach Jozef Chovanec a good idea as to whether his side have a chance of going to the European Championship without recourse to the play-offs.

The squad have plenty of high-quality professionals based abroad, but last season Chovanec and his predecessor, Dusan Uhrin – admittedly in a transitional period – used more than 30 players and the mixture still did not seem right.

No player was picked for every match; only Radek Bejbl, Michal Hornak and Jiri Nemec went close.

Much of the opposition was modest in the 15 games played last season. When it was not, in friendlies with Brazil and Uruguay, goals were hard to come by, though Slovakia and the Republic of Ireland were defeated, again in friendlies.

Sparta hotshot...Horst Siegl

Now Chovanec could be up against it. Domestic football has yet to throw up a new goalscorer. Nevertheless, Sparta's Horst Siegl, last season's top scorer, may find difficulty in winning a place in the starting line-up.

Sparta lead the table, with great rivals Slavia 11 points behind in fourth. Petra Drnovice and FK Teplice lie between them.

Relegation may well be tight, with Dukla, Viktoria Plzen and FC Karvina in the deepest mire. Two go down.

Dukla, now based south of Prague in Pribram, may again escape, while FA president Frantisek Chvalovsky's Chmel Blsany, from a small town in the hop country, look capable of maintaining their place in the top flight.

Whether 18 clubs in the division is too many is a question that should perhaps be raised. The competition in no way compares with the old Czechoslovak League. It's time to talk about a Mitropa League!

Bob Vaughan

HUNGARY

MTK well in front

MTK are making the running, and a 2-1 victory in Vac meant the lead over Gyor was extended to eight points.

The following pack are all provincial clubs: Dunaferr, Diosgyor and Zalaegerszeg, now more snappily renamed Zalahus ZTE FC.

Defending champions Ujpest are well out of contention, but defeating strugglers BVSC from across Budapest gives them hope of a UEFA placing. Ferencvaros have also shown that they have not given up, despite a poor first half to the season.

Hapless Kerulet were torn to ribbons at Ferencvaros' Ulloi ut stadium. They conceded seven goals and stay in the third relegation spot, with only Videoton and Haladas propping them up.

Off the field, the lingering government threat to unseat the top officials at the FA led FIFA and UEFA to make telephone calls to Budapest.

The association's president, Attila Kovacs, and his commission remain suspended, but there should be new faces in office come Easter.

Bob Vaughan

ROMANIA

Travel causes a problem

ROMANIA went in to their Euro 2000 double-header, at home to Slovakia and away to Azerbaijan, with the main problem being the travel arrangements.

Portugal, with an easier spring programme, look the greatest danger, and the real showdown probably will not come until they visit Bucharest in early September.

In the League, Rapid look determined to take the title, which has for so long eluded them. Full points, comfortably won at home to sixth-placed Arges Pitesti, kept them top, but Dinamo are still challenging after getting the best of five goals against a sprightly Gloria.

Bob Vaughan

SLOVAKIA

Inter on the trail

NEW national coach Jozef Adamec, who once scored a hat-trick against Brazil, at least lasted in office long enough to get to the bench for a full international, which is more than predecessor Dusan Galis achieved.

Galis is back at Trnava trying to catch leaders Inter Bratislava, the most consistent of the top clubs this season. Whether the second team in the capital can keep it up throughout the second half of the season is the question, but victories over local rivals Artmedia Petrzalka and in Zilina, while Trnava and FC Kosice were drawing, kept their hopes up.

Slovan, now under Jan Svehlik, could be challenging, too, after a satisfactory start to the spring round when Dukla Banska Bystrica were defeated 3-0.

The two relegation places continue to be occupied by Tauris Rimavska Sobota and Bardejov. How such clubs from remote parts of the east are managing to survive is a mystery, given their tiny resources.

Bob Vaughan

POLAND

Wisla march on

WISLA KRAKOW, the favourites, led the table with 49 points after 19 games, nine more than second-placed Lech Poznan. They are clear favourites to win the title for a sixth time, but the first since 1978.

The margin could have been even greater, but Wisla unexpectedly lost 3-1 at home to Polonia Warsaw, last season's runners-up, who lie sixth.

Polonia, under a new coach, Dariusz Wdowczyk, a former Celtic and Reading player, are hoping for a European place next season. They won three successive games after the winter break and then drew 0-0 with champions LKS Lodz, who are fighting relegation after selling their best players, Miroslaw Trzeciak, to Osasuna, and Tomasz Klos, to Auxerre.

LKS are twelfth with 19 points, only two more than the bottom club, Stomil Olsztyn, but they are not lacking support. Antoni Ptak, the club's chairman and owner, has given fans free admission to games until the end of the season! Consequently, they have had the highest attendance in the spring games – averaging more than 10,000.

FIFA have sent the Polish FA a letter demanding the election of a new chairman. It has been forced to do so to try to end the conflict between the FA and the Ministry of Sport, which has been dragging on since April last year.

The extraordinary FA meeting in February did not elect anybody, and it is still possible that FIFA may suspend Polish teams from international competition.

Dariusz Kurowski

Sold by LKS...Osasuna's Trzeciak

Pro-file Catalin Munteanu

Romanian prodigy set to take on Hagi's mantle

WHAT'S IN A NAME? Plenty if you are Romanian, with the vastly experienced Dorinel Munteanu calling the shots in the national team's midfield alongside unrelated namesake and potential Balkan treasure, Catalin.

While much has been made over the past three or four years of the high proportion of leg-weary, elder statesmen in the Romanian line-up, the nation does possess a sizeable stock of good quality youngsters waiting in the wings. And it is Catalin Munteanu who leads a pack of promising wannabes, which includes Dinamo Bucharest strikers Marcus Niculae and Adrian Mihalcea, Anderlecht wing-back Alin Stoica and midfielder Denis Serban of Valencia.

Ex-Romania boss Anghel Iordanescu gave the teenage Munteanu his first cap, as a substitute in a friendly against Spain towards the end of 1997. But that was the only good news Catalin received from national team headquarters last term.

In May, Iordanescu concluded that France 98 was no place for a youngster in his debut season, making the none-too-popular decision to overlook Munteanu's midfield craft and 17-goal contribution to Steaua Bucharest's sixth consecutive title.

Catalin's situation was soon to change for the better, however. Iordanescu's post-World Cup appointment as manager of Greece and the retirement from international football of Romanian superstar Gheorghe Hagi created a whole new ball game, and new national coach Victor Piturca has made the prodigy an integral part of his plans.

Young Munteanu does not yet lord it over the Romanian team in the imperious style of Hagi – it would be too much to ask of a 19-year-old – and Piturca, keen to share out the playmaking duties, usually plays him on the right of a midfield that also features Dorinel Munteanu, Constantin Galca and Florentin Petre.

But it is a fluid midfield scheme and Catalin is afforded much scope to roam and hurt the opposition with his pace, vision and invention – a brief he has fulfilled to perfection as Romania made an impressive start in their Euro 2000 group. With his international scoring account also in credit after tucking away a goal in the 7-0 romp against Liechtenstein last September, there is a great deal for him to be satisfied with.

"It's wonderful to have broken into the Romania side," says Catalin. "It was disappointing not to go to France. But I've only just started my career and there will hopefully be many other big tournaments to take part in. I'm already looking forward to the European Championship in Holland and Belgium. I'm sure Romania will be there.

"I know a lot is expected of me. Hagi retires, I come in and everyone thinks I should be carrying on where he left off. It's not so simple. First, Hagi is irreplaceable; second, I have a long way to go to achieve even a fraction of what he did in the game."

If only his life at club level was as sweet. Despite French big guns Marseille and Paris Saint-Germain being rumoured to be interested in him, Munteanu ended up signing for Spanish side Salamanca last summer, linking with compatriots Bogdan Stelea, the national keeper, and former Rapid Bucharest schemer Lucian Marinescu. But thus far it has been a case of 'could do better'. Salamanca have the worst away record in Europe and have their work cut out to avoid relegation. In such a depressing context, Munteanu has only performed in fits and starts.

Missing out on the French Connection must now be a source of regret for the brilliant young Romanian.

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club Salamanca (Spa)
Country Romania
Born October 26, 1979, in Bucharest
Previous club Steaua Bucharest
International debut November 1997, v Spain
International caps 7 (1 goal)
Honours Romanian League 1998

ARGENTINA

Violent times

The players' strike is over but the hooligan problem persists, says Eric Weil

Pitched battle...fans of Boca and Chacarita Juniors clashed during a training match

A MONTH-LONG strike by First Division players – in support of those in lower divisions whose tournaments had been banned by the courts because of hooliganism – was suddenly ended when the courts lifted the ban, probably due to government pressure.

Only hours before that, there had been horrific battles between fans of Boca Juniors and those of visiting club Chacarita Juniors during a training match which was screened on TV.

The ban, which had started last November, now seems useless. There continues to be regular fighting between hooligans at lower-division games.

Only a few days after the end of the strike, which delayed the start of the closing championship by three weeks, another court decided to close Racing Club – one of Argentina's Big Six – following several postponements to their bankruptcy proceedings, which had begun last July.

This meant that they could not fulfil their fixtures, but their many fans rallied to protest to the government and 35,000 turned up at their stadium on a Sunday at the time their side should have been playing. It was the biggest 'gate' of the day.

This being election year, the government again put pressure on the courts, which suddenly found there had been a mistake in their ruling and that Racing (with debts of some £40million) could play until they are put in the hands of receivers for auction within four months. There are several schemes to save the club, but no one has yet come up with cash and the position is still precarious.

Opening championship winners Boca Juniors carried on where they left off, winning their first three games with an unchanged side and a 9-0 goals record. They also established a club record unbeaten streak of 27 League games, which dates back to last season.

River Plate shared the lead, but had to work much harder for their three victories. They let another key player go – Santiago Solari to Atletico Madrid – and are wracked by internal political problems. River also have debts of £20m, which is strange considering they have sold so many leading players lately.

With few close-season transfers, the most significant changes came at San Lorenzo, where new coach Oscar Ruggeri has completely changed training and playing styles. The club are joint third, although several top players have moved on and nobody has replaced them.

Changes at San Lorenzo...Oscar Ruggeri

URUGUAY

Coaches on strike

A STRIKE of coaches threatened to hold up the start of the championship. They were protesting at a new ruling that all team managers must have a local coaching certificate.

This was directed principally at Hugo De Leon, coach of champions Nacional, who obtained his certificate in Brazil. But not only coaches are protesting. The Uruguayan FA wants to hire former Argentina boss Daniel Passarella to lead the national team. There have been threats that the FA offices will be bombed if this goes ahead.

Penarol, under new coach Julio Ribas are joint leaders with Danubio after three games in the opening championship, but Nacional are a point behind with a game in hand.

The Montevideo-based First Division is including provincial teams for the first time this season and has been increased by four clubs, to 15. This is to increase country-wide interest, but the newcomers have so far hardly shown First Division standard – except for Frontera Rivera, who drew their first two games. Their players include international Ruben Paz, who returns to the top flight at the age of 39.

A grass plague has left the turf at Montevideo's Centenario stadium – venue for the first World Cup Final – almost bare, and English expert Jeff Parris has been called in.

Statistics show that 89 players moved abroad from Uruguay in 1998, during which Uruguayan players scored 633 goals in 22 countries.

Eric Weil

ROUND-UP BY ERIC WEIL

Morning have their day

IN CHILE... Santiago Morning, one of the country's oldest clubs, are back in the top division after 15 years and were the surprise leaders after four games. Universidad Catolica, the club who had done most strengthening in the close season, were sixth.

Catolica signed two leading players from Argentina, midfielder Marcelo Carracedo and striker Julio Brizuela. They also welcomed back Sebastian Rozental, who had an unhappy injury-hit time in Scotland with Rangers but is now fit again.

First Division clubs will have a long haul this season. After they play each other twice in the 16-team League, the top eight will again play each other twice for the title, currently held by Colo Colo.

Temuco, relegated last season, have been expelled from the Second Division due to financial problems.

IN COLOMBIA... John Jairo Tellez, who failed to hit it off at Argentina's Boca Juniors, has rediscovered the scoring knack. Nine goals in the first seven matches helped America to the top of the table.

A barrier gave way during America's 3-0 win at Deportivo Cali's packed stadium, leaving 23 fans injured, some seriously.

IN BOLIVIA...champions Blooming are in mid-table while last term's runners-up Jorge Wilstermann are bottom, despite signing international Julio Baldivieso and Brazilian Sergio Joao, a leading scorer with Bolivar.

IN ECUADOR...last year's losing Libertadores Cup finalists, Barcelona, have been declared insolvent by the courts, but they are joint leaders after three games of the opening championship.

IN VENEZUELA...leading club Minerven have folded. They were left out of the closing championship due to financial difficulties, then did not turn up for two Second Division games and were expelled by the FA.

Games hit by boycott

THERE WILL be no South American teams in this year's Pan American Games soccer tournament in Winnipeg, because the organisers refuse to pay players.

CONMEBOL was willing to offer money in exchange for TV rights, but the organisers refused.

● Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay qualified to take part in this year's World Under-17 championship in New Zealand by taking the top three places in the South American championship, played in Uruguay. Brazil defeated Paraguay 5-0 in the Final; Uruguay beat Argentina 4-2 for third place.

MEN IN THE NEWS

Trio train in England

THREE Argentinian players – **SANTIAGO KUHL**, 17, of Argentinos Juniors, **MAURO MACHADO**, 18, of Rosario Central, and **CLAUDIO ORTIZ**, 17, of River Plate, went to England in March for two weeks' training with Manchester United in an exchange programme.

Three Manchester United youngsters are due to go to Argentina in the autumn.

● **DAVID PIZARRO**, a Chilean Under-20 international midfielder, was transferred from Wanderers of Chile to Italian side Udinese for £1.2million.

Prison threat...striker Edmundo

Edmundo faces jail

BRAZILIAN striker **EDMUNDO**, who plays for Italy's Fiorentina, was sentenced to four and a half years in a semi-open prison in Rio de Janeiro for his part in a car crash in 1995, in which three people were killed. Edmundo, who was driving, is unlikely to end up behind bars, although the courts have asked for his extradition from Italy.

SERGIO GOYCOCHEA, Argentina's goalkeeper in the 1990 World Cup, has decided to retire after spending last season with Newell's Old Boys.

MARCELO BARTICCIOTTO, 32, an Argentinian midfielder/striker with Chile's Colo Colo, should have no problems when he retires. He has begun a successful singing career and recently performed at the Vina del Mar festival of song in Chile in front of 20,000 people.

Argentina's Inland Revenue is currently investigating several leading players but former Uruguay international **ENZO FRANCESCOLI** is definitely not among them. He is about to get money back having paid too much tax!

Eric Weil

Globo splash the cash – carefully

BRAZIL

THE UNUSUAL prospect of this year's Carioca (Rio) championship actually finishing without boycotts, walkovers and other such confusion has suddenly arisen after Globo television bought up the competition lock, stock and barrel.

Globo are forking out around £7million for the privilege of screening the tournament and are clearly aware of what they are letting themselves in for. The contract with the clubs and the Rio federation is littered with clauses determining fines if a team fail to appear for a match or rearrange a fixture at short notice. There is even a section devoted to the possibility of the championship not finishing at all.

The list of fines includes £320,000 for a club not turning up for a game and a whacking £2.7m to be paid jointly by the clubs and the federation if the tournament does not end.

A quick look back at the last two editions of the championship is enough to reveal that Globo are merely being sensible as opposed to paranoid. In 1997, the tournament was interrupted for two months at three days' notice after Vasco da Gama discovered a rule which that decreed they did not have to play after having two players picked for the Copa America. When the tournament resumed, Flamengo said they were otherwise engaged, refused to play and lost their two remaining matches by walkovers. These results put Vasco into the Final against Botafogo, the eventual champions.

Last year, Vasco won the title after Flamengo, Fluminense and Botafogo all refused to turn up for their final matches in protest at last-minute changes in the venue. A repetition this year, however, will hit the clubs where it hurts most.

Globo are not only paying to screen the tournament, they are also selling most of the tickets for most of the matches and have merchandising rights as well. In return, they want a fixture list that is issued in advance and matches to be played at the time and venue originally determined. This sounds normal in most countries but it is a concept Brazilian directors have never been able to grasp.

Even the format has been made reasonably comprehensible this year. The 10 teams play in a single group, divided into two stages. All the sides meet each other once in each stage, and the winners of the two stages meet in the Final.

Vasco da Gama started as favourites to defend their title, with Flamengo, Fluminense, now coached by Carlos Alberto Parreira, and Botafogo the other main contenders. The other six teams are merely dreaming of emulating Bangu, the last club from outside the big four to win the title – back in 1966. Botafogo manager Valdir Espinosa lasted only two matches before being sacked after a shock 1-0 defeat by Friburguense.

Vasco had won the season-opening Rio-Sao Paulo championship, beating Santos 5-2 on aggregate in the Final, and became one of the first teams to reach the third round of the Copa Brasil when they overcame America-Natal 3-0 on aggregate.

In the first leg, police in Natal proved to be more problematic than the America team. Vasco's 1-0 away win was comfortable enough but the players first had to overcome the trauma of a pre-match fight with local police.

A group of Vasco players were watching the preliminary match without their shirts on, behaviour which apparently needed the intervention of around 20 gun-and-truncheon-wielding police. Insults were exchanged, the officials pushed and shoved the players and the Vasco star Felipe was briefly handcuffed before the situation calmed down.

"I felt very embarrassed when I was handcuffed," said Felipe. "The police's job is to chase after crooks and not people who work like us. I want to thank our security man. If he hadn't been there, I would have got a good beating. Just because the guy's a policeman, it doesn't give him the right to go hitting people."

Brush with the law...Vasco da Gama's Felipe

Sao Paulo were the other team into the third round by press time, having overcome Ypiranga in a match played in two hemispheres. The equator runs right through the middle of the Zerao stadium in Macapa, where Ypiranga play. As Macapa does not have a major club – Ypiranga are little more than semi-professional – Zerao has become something of a white elephant.

The Copa Brasil is a curious competition, designed mainly to make sure that the major clubs play at least one match a year in the farthest-flung outposts of the country. The major teams are always away in their first round, first leg matches and the second leg is not played if the home team lose by two goals or more.

Unlike the FA Cup, however, there are few fairytales. Portuguesa required a seven-hour flight to get them to Rio Branco, near the Peruvian border, for their game away to Independencia, although even this failed to dampen the spirits of veteran manager Mario Zagallo. The 'Old Wolf', who has made an excellent start after moving to Sao Paulo for the first time, said simply: "Now there will be only two states in Brazil that I haven't been to – Tocantins and Roraima."

He certainly put a brighter face on things than Sport Recife. Their first leg away to Nacional in the Amazonian capital of Manaus was postponed because the entire delegation was bumped off their flight after failing to reconfirm their seats.

Brian Homewood

Off and running again

UNITED STATES

Paul Gardner on the start of the fourth season of Major League Soccer

THE MLS SEASON gets under way, the most important season so far, the crucial, the critical, fourth year. So what else is new? Every season so far has been critical, the most important…and MLS has survived.

As Commissioner Doug Logan points out, it has even managed to have all its clubs still playing in their original cities – not a bad achievement in this country, where teams frequently jump from place to place in search of richer pastures.

In Columbus, Ohio, there is the added attraction of a brand new stadium, specifically built for soccer. This has never happened before in the professional game over here. The hope now is that other clubs – all of whom are uneasy tenants in gridiron football stadiums – will follow suit. The New York/New Jersey MetroStars have been talking about a new stadium for two years, though the authorities at Giants Stadium, where they currently play, have not been particularly co-operative, nor has attendance been a strong point.

Overall, Logan claims that the League "is running about three per cent ahead of last year in season ticket sales", which he says gives him "reason for cautious optimism". However, that figure is not quite what it seems. The new stadium has caused a 48 per cent increase in sales in Columbus, but elsewhere, sales are up at six clubs and down at five.

There have been no major player signings. Indeed, one star may be lost to the League: Mexican goalkeeper Jorge Campos of Chicago Fire has commitments to Mexican club UNAM and to his national team that may make him unavailable. Not that Fire will worry – last season, when they won the championship, they preferred to use American Zach Thornton.

MLS has clearly decided not to spend money on famous names, but to look for good younger (and cheaper) players. There is also evidently a feeling that the Americans coming through are getting better rapidly. However, this remains a theory yet to be proved – many feel that the lack of big names is what is causing the stagnation in the League's attendance figures.

The League, says Logan, has "financial goals", which he does not specify, and the investors have already made a commitment to financing for the next five years: "This season I would look for improvements in our TV ratings and attendances, and continued improvement in the way we play on the field. We've come a long way in three years."

The MetroStars remain the League's biggest disappointment and biggest problem. It was a power play by their owner, Stuart Subotnick, that forced MLS deputy commissioner Sunil Gulati out of office, a move that has been widely criticised and that seems to have no benefits at all for the League.

The MetroStars, after three seasons of poor play and sliding attendances, have at last made some front-office changes, which have Doug Logan saying that he is "pretty bullish on their future".

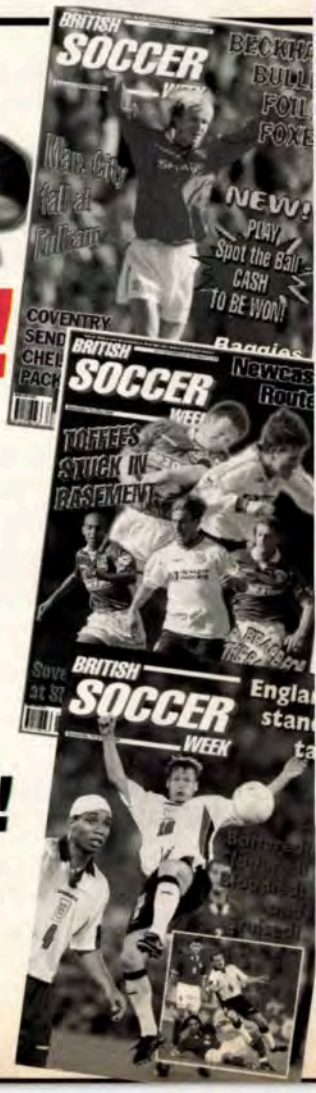
Such optimism seems totally misplaced when you listen to the words of Jim Leahy, one of the new guys brought in to jazz up the MetroStars' marketing. He has been quoted as saying: "The only way you would get me out to a soccer game is if my kids were to drag me out." And this from the guy whose job is to sell MetroStars tickets.

Another bright Leahy method of selling season tickets is to tell potential buyers that, if they don't cough up, then "don't complain about soccer not being here 10 years from now".

Among other threats held out by Leahy is music during games. "Any opportunity where we have some 'dead time', why not entertain some of the people that are sitting there?" he ventured. "Why not play a few rock and roll tunes? We're in the entertainment business."

Then there is the idea for mini-cheerleaders. "Well, they're not going to be 20-year-olds, they're going to be little girls who are six or seven or eight, up to 12 years old, who are not currently involved in soccer."

The idea that the MetroStars' ticket-selling problems are more related to the abysmal performance of the team than to the absence of cheering nymphets seems not to have been considered by Mr Leahy.



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Interview Bruce Arena

Paul Gardner talks to the US national coach

BORN IN Brooklyn, New York, Bruce Arena (right) starred in soccer, as a keeper, and lacrosse at Cornell University. Five years after graduating in 1973, he became head soccer coach at the University of Virginia. In 1981, he began a 15-year string of winning seasons, which included five Division One college titles. In 1996 he switched to the professional game as head coach of DC United in the newly formed MLS, leading the team to the championship in both 1996 and 1997. He replaced Steve Sampson as national team coach in 1998.

***WORLD SOCCER*: How do you assess the 3-0 win over Germany?**
BRUCE ARENA: The reality is that we're not as far down the food chain as people thought – it demonstrated that, with time and more cohesion, there's a chance of us being pretty good. But it is also pretty obvious that we have a way to go. We lack depth, and during the next year we hope to improve that weakness; it will be another year of looking at young players, mostly from MLS.

What is your principal aim?
Qualifying for the 2002 World Cup. The natural evolution of the team will coincide with the pro league. If MLS continues to improve, so will the national team. If MLS fails, I think it'll have a tremendously negative impact on our national team programme. Every strong power has a strong domestic league, it's critical.

Does coaching the USA have any unique problems?
The size of the country, for one. And our location – it makes it difficult to get games against top European and South American teams. We also have a unique soccer culture. Too many people concentrate only on their little niches – youth, amateur, college soccer – they're not unified to understand the big picture. That's why we need the pro league. The national team will do well if we have a good domestic league; that's the important part, to place emphasis on MLS and give it as much support as possible.

Has the poor showing in France made life more difficult for you?
It would have been nice to have a better showing, but what happened probably helped accelerate things. Some changes need to be made. If we'd left France with people generally pleased at our performance, they may not have seen that some of the programme's foundations were crumbling – mainly the need for young players to be thrown in.

Does your use of younger players mean we've seen the last of, say, John Harkes, Marcelo Balboa or Eric Wynalda?
Some of the old generation are out, some aren't. They can maybe help us at different stages – some right now, but not next year, or during the World Cup qualifiers but not at the World Cup itself. I can't ignore players who can still help us, like Tab Ramos, Tony Meola, Kasey Keller or Harkes; I continue to consider them part of the programme.

You've said before that the team is more about players than coaching...
Obviously, the coach has a role – to select the right players, put them in the right spots and give them a common way of playing that benefits the team. But, clearly, I'm a better coach when Claudio Reyna is on the field than when he isn't! We need a style we can use most of the time and that our players understand – you can't look like a different team every time you take the field. We're beginning to understand how we can play well as a team. If I've accomplished anything in my first games, it's to make us more comfortable playing together. Hopefully, we have a common way of playing, that even when we're missing players we can play as a unit. It doesn't matter who we're playing – it matters *how* we're playing. That's what we're judging now; it's the only thing we can control.

ARENA'S VIEWS ON THE NEW BOYS HE'S USED

Great potential...Zach Thornton

Zach THORNTON
(Goalkeeper, Chicago Fire, aged 26)
He has a lot of raw talent and is two or three years away from being a true international goalkeeper.

C J BROWN
(Defender, Chicago Fire, 23)
Hard-nosed defender, great competitor. He's in a little over his head right now, but doing better than I envisioned.

Robin FRASER
(Defender, Los Angeles Galaxy, 32, born in Jamaica)
A talented, experienced player with great leadership qualities – something we lack at the back. He's 32, but a young 32. Very rarely beaten in a foot race.

Carlos LLAMOSA
(Defender, DC United, 29, born in Colombia)
A great defender – he has all the natural instincts about how to defend and position himself. An outright, pure defender.

Chris ARMAS
(Midfielder, Chicago Fire, 26)
He's been a great surprise – a ball-winner in midfield and a good passer, he makes the game easy for players around him.

Eddie LEWIS
(Midfielder, San Jose Clash, 25)
Another pleasant surprise – a left-footed player who fills a void on our left side, where he can attack and defend.

Jovan KIROVSKI
(Midfielder, Fortuna Koln, 23)
Clearly an attacking player out of the midfield who can hold the ball, playmake a bit and score goals.

Tony SANNEH
(Midfielder, Hertha Berlin, 27)
He has great physical presence with a very good understanding of the game – a good ball-winner and very easy to play with. A smart player.

Richie WILLIAMS
(Midfielder, DC United, 28)
A good player who knows the game and knows what he can do. Reliable and solid.

Ben OLSEN
(Midfielder, DC United, 22)
A great young player. Can play his position well against anyone, running at players with the ball and winning his battles. Doesn't back down and has great confidence.

Ante RAZOV
(Forward, Chicago Fire, 25)
A big striker who runs strongly and is a good finisher, though he lacks consistency and experience.

Attack-minded...Kirovski, with Reyna

Ghana and Nigeria take over

Mark Gleeson on the latest Nations Cup surprise

THE Confederation of African Football sprang yet another surprise with its decision to hand over the hosting of next year's African Nations Cup to Ghana and Nigeria.

This follows the decision to strip Zimbabwe of the right to host the 22nd edition of the tournament, the showpiece of African soccer, in the wake of uncertainty about the country's ability to stage it properly.

But questions are now being raised about whether Ghana and Nigeria can do a better job, and whether the change of venue is a form of punishment for Zimbabwe's backing of Sepp Blatter instead of CAF's preferred candidate, Lennart Johansson, in last year's FIFA presidential elections.

This is the first Nations Cup, held every two years, to be co-hosted. Both countries will stage 16 matches between January 12 and February 13 next year, with the opening game in Accra and the Final at the National Stadium in Surelere, Lagos.

As reported in last month's *World Soccer*, Zimbabwe's slow pace of reconstruction and renovation of their proposed venues, plus the lack of obvious financial commitment from the government, led CAF to take the tournament away from the country. New bids were invited, with Ghana, Morocco and Nigeria putting their names forward, while a last-minute plea for clemency from the Zimbabweans also was to be considered when the confederation's committee met again in mid-March.

CAF decided that Zimbabwe remained incapable of hosting the tournament, and ruled out Morocco because they had hosted the finals as recently as 1988. Nigeria's only other previous hosting of the Nations Cup was in 1980, and the 1978 edition was held in Ghana.

But the reason that Morocco's bid was rejected also might have had something to do with these facts: CAF president Issa Hayatou is standing for re-election at the CAF Congress, which will be held two days before the start of the finals, and faces opposition from an Arab-financed campaign for Egyptian FA president Samir Zaher.

All the drama has done nothing to halt the decline of the image of African sports administrators, and highlights CAF's inability to anticipate potential problems and deal with them. It seems a reactive organisation rather than proactive.

The committee, however, deserve praise for allowing Zimbabwe to play in the qualifiers, even though the preliminary tournament is at the halfway stage. They will play in a special play-off group on a home-and-away basis with the runners-up of qualifying groups 1 and 5, in which Ghana and Nigeria no longer have to play because they now qualify automatically.

CLUB COMPETITIONS

Hassan still among the goals

EGYPTIAN international Hossam Hassan is continuing his amazing scoring exploits well into a second decade at the top of African soccer. His latest exploit was a hat-trick away to Maji Maji of Tanzania as his club, Al Ahly, made an explosive start to this year's Champions League.

Their performance in Dar-es-Salaam contrasted sharply with that of defending champions ASEC Abidjan of Ivory Coast. They lost the first leg of their first round tie, away at FC105 Libreville, the military team from Gabon.

There was also an away defeat for 1997 champions Raja Casablanca of Morocco, beaten by Senegal's ASC Ndiambour in the first leg, with Makhene Ndiaye scoring an injury-time winner.

The Cup-winners Cup field includes several former Champions League winners, including Royal Armed Forces of Morocco, Tunisia's Club Africain and Orlando Pirates of South Africa, who all made solid starts.

Financially troubled Nkana FC of Zambia were on the verge of pulling out of the CAF Cup until their former owners, a copper mining house, stepped in with late sponsorship. The gesture had been forced by a threatened strike by the miners, angry that the traditional backing of Nkana's continental campaigns was not going to continue.

Mark Gleeson

Mauritius cause an upset

WITH Nations Cup co-hosts Ghana now through automatically to the finals, Tunisia were the only team left with a 100 per cent record at the halfway stage of the qualifiers.

Several countries managed to maintain their unbeaten records in the latest round of matches, but it was the tiny island of Mauritius who stole the show. They won 2-0 away to Angola, thus going second in their group.

This was only the second time that Mauritius had won away in a Nations Cup qualifier, while Angola had their 17-match unbeaten home run ended.

Christopher Perle, from German amateur club Paderhorn, and Jean-Sebastien Bax were the scorers at the imposing Cidadela Stadium.

Group 1: Cameroon won for the first time in the group, with Cagliari's Patrick Mboma scoring in the first half against Mozambique. The Indomitable Lions did not impress, but at least Mozambique will be weakened when the sides meet again, in the next group match, having had two players sent off in the second half.

Group 2: Sierra Leone failed to turn up for their match against Guinea, having sought a postponement which was not granted by CAF. They are now banned from the group, leaving three teams chasing two places.

Morocco won away against Togo to retain the lead in the group, despite the home side twice coming back from a goal down. Abdeljilil 'Camacho' Hadda scored twice for the visitors, Mustapha Hadji getting the other.

Group 3: There was controversy over the condition of the plane that took the Ivory Coast team to Congo for their match in Pointe Noire. Congo then defeated the visitors on a patchy pitch, with a Maurice Ntounou goal on the hour.

The match between Namibia and Mali was put back to May 9 at the request of the Malians.

Group 4: Mauritius beat a weakened Angola, 25 years after their one and only appearance in the Nations Cup finals. Captain Jean-Marc Ithier made both goals for the Mauritians.

South Africa had to come from behind to beat Gabon before a massive crowd at Odi stadium outside Pretoria. Gabon took the lead through Theodore Nzue-Nguema. But South Africa outfought them, with goals coming from John Moeti, Phil Masinga, Shaun Bartlett and Benni McCarthy.

XXXXXXXXXXXX

Group 5: Burkina Faso lead the standings after a difficult 2-1 win away over Burundi in Bujumbura. Mamadou Zongo's early goal was equalised by defender Debo Kitenge, from a penalty, in the 24th minute. Romeo Kambou got the winner on the hour.

Group 6: A second successive away win puts Zambia firmly in control of the group. Denis Lota's early goal, from a Mwape Miti cross, decided the game, despite the fact that Kenya had the better of the play. However, they were poor in front of goal, prompting Nigeria-born coach Christian Chukwu to say: "We paid dearly for our mistakes. I keep telling my players about the importance of treating every match with the seriousness it deserves."

Madagascar had lost their previous match, at home to the Zambians, but are now back in the frame after hammering the Democratic Republic of Congo in Antananarivo. The Rasoanaivo brothers, Fidy and Rado, both got goals after Ruphin Menakely had opened the scoring in the first half.

The Malagasy lost Ralison to a red card in the 66th minute but conceded only one late goal, to Essele Bakasu.

Group 7: Tunisia used the wings to brilliant effect when thumping Uganda 6-0 at El Menzah stadium. The scorers included Hassan Gabsi, now recovered from a serious injury and back in midfield.

Tunisia have nine points and are almost home and dry in their quest to qualify. But second place is still wide open, with Liberia losing a great chance to open a gap when drawing at home to Algeria. Substitute Saifi scored for the beleaguered Algerians, who had lost their two opening games, and Italy-based Zizi Roberts got the much-needed equaliser.

Injured George Weah did not play but is now very much in control of Liberia's coaching and selection, along with senior team-mates James Debbah and Joe Nagbe.

Mark Gleeson

Reunion for Papin

EAST AFRICA

FORMER France international Jean-Pierre Papin has joined Saint Pierroise on the Indian Ocean island of **REUNION**. Now 35, Papin will play for the club for three months.

Champions of **KENYA**, AFC Leopards, have sacked coach Sunday Kayuni after their dismal performance in the East and Central African Club Championship in Uganda.

TANZANIA have lost their League sponsors in a row over a plan to introduce a zonal format.

Unheralded Iganga have won six in a row at the start of the new Super League in **UGANDA**. They now lead by five points from Scoul.

Ethnic rioting in **MAURITIUS** has led to the suspension of the League, although the FA has asked for matches to continue to be played behind closed doors.

Coach Maurice Mosa has left Scouts Club after their surprise early elimination from the Champions League. He has been replaced by Ramadhan Nfanzurmo from Burundi.

The dates of this year's East and Central African Senior Challenge Cup in **RWANDA** have been changed to July 24-August 7.

CENTRAL AFRICA

CONGO have withdrawn from the preliminaries for the All-Africa Games football competition.

Racing Bafoussam are the early leaders in **CAMEROON**.

NORTH AFRICA

AL AHLY have won a sixth successive title in **EGYPT**.

Former national coach Farouk Gaafar has taken over at Zamalek, who are second in the table. He replaces Dutchman Ruud Krol.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

MORE than 20 supporters of **ZAMBIAN** champions Nchanga Rangers were injured when their bus careered off the road on the way home from the Charity Shield match in Kitwe against Green Buffaloes. Rangers won the game 1-0.

SWAZILAND's champions are Manzini Wanderers, who finished three points ahead of Mbabane Highlanders.

Dynamos are destined to win another title in **ZIMBABWE**. They lead Highlanders by seven points.

Kaizer Chiefs are the leaders in **SOUTH AFRICA** going into the final straight, but face a three-way fight for the title with Mamelodi Sundowns and Manning Rangers.

WEST AFRICA

A FIRST-HALF goal from Kingston Laryea was enough to give **GHANA** victory in the African Under-20 championship in Accra. They now qualify for the World Youth Cup, along with the other three semi-finalists from the African tournament – Cameroon, Zambia and Mali.

An inquiry has been set up in Ghana to investigate the transfer market following financial disputes and allegations of illegal payments.

GUINEA host Cameroon in the opening match of the African Under-17 championship, which starts in Conakry on May 16. Burkina Faso and Zimbabwe also are in Group A. In Group B, Angola and Mali will meet the winners of the delayed qualifying matches Ghana v Tunisia and Ethiopia v Nigeria.

ASEC Abidjan added the **IVORY COAST** Super Cup to their African Super Cup triumph in February. They beat arch-rivals Africa Sports 2-0.

In **NIGERIA**, Plateau United lead Lobi Stars by two points at the top of the table.

Mark Gleeson

Island life...Jean-Pierre Papin

Pro-file Chiquinho Conde

Mozambique's record-breaking goalscorer

TRYING to follow Eusebio and Mario Coluna was always going to prove difficult, but Chiquinho Conde has been able to carve a little glory for himself in Portugal as yet another fine footballing export from Mozambique.

Portugal's five African colonies were regarded as part of the mainland until their abrupt independence in 1975 and although that was almost 25 years ago now, Mozambique's leading players still almost exclusively head for the Iberian peninsula.

Chiquinho Conde has been the country's best export since independence and possibly, even with his low profile, the best foreigner in the Portuguese League over the past 10 years.

Now 33, and in his third spell at Vitoria Setubal, Chiquinho Conde is the current leading scorer in the Portuguese League, with 250 goals since arriving at Lisbon's other, somewhat forgotten club, Belenenses, in 1987.

Born Francisco Queiral Conde Junior in Mozambique's second city of Beira, he was an instant success after his first season in the provincial league with Palmeiras, which brought him to national attention. His elder brother Geraldo de Jesus Conde, was a regular in the Mozambique team and Chiquinho Conde quickly followed him.

All Mozambique's top stars migrate to the capital Maputo, in the extreme south, and Conde spent a single season at Maxaquene in 1986 and played for Mozambique in their first African Nations Cup finals appearance.

Club commitments in Portugal, where he is now a citizen, have kept him from most of Mozambique's matches over the past decade, but he has always been available for vital qualifying ties, coming back to the country like an all-conquering king to captain the national side.

Conde says the highlight of his career was Belenenses' Cup Final against Benfica in 1989, which they won 2-1 after having disposed of FC Porto and Sporting.

"It was my first title and a brilliant game," he says. There was another Cup medal with Sporting six years later but Conde has never had an opportunity to win the League. He went to Sporting after finishing top scorer with Setubal at the end of the 1993-94 season, but he spent just one season with the Lions and, despite the Cup medal, never went close to the championship.

There was also a brief spell in the MLS in the United States but he went back to Setubal on loan in the off-season and has stayed on ever since.

Conde, who trained as a civil engineer, says he wants to continue in football as a coach, preferably in his adopted homeland – his children have to finish their schooling before he would return to Mozambique.

Mark Gleeson

Fact file

Club Vitoria Setubal (Por)
Country Mozambique
Born Nov 22, 1965, in Beira
Previous clubs Centro Africano, Ferroviario da Beira, Palmeiras da Beira, Maxaquene, Belenenses (Por), Braga (Por), Sporting Lisbon (Por), New England Revolution (US), Tampa Bay Mutiny (US)
International debut Feb 19086, v Algeria
Caps 37 (10 gls)

JAPAN

Stojkovic gets season off to a good start

DRAGAN STOJKOVIC of Nagoya Grampus Eight scored the first goal, Hristo Stoichkov of Kashiwa Reysol was sent off, and champions Kashima Antlers coasted to a 4-0 win over JEF United Ichihara on the opening day of the new J.League season.

A week later, JEF held Urawa Reds to a 0-0 scoreline. The match goes down in history as the first draw in the J.League, now entering its seventh season.

Before the League came the Xerox Super Cup, between champions Antlers and, because Emperor's Cup winners Yokohama Flugels have folded, the beaten finalists Shimizu S-Pulse.

Atsushi Yanagisawa put Antlers in front in the 24th minute, Masaaki Sawanobori equalised a minute later, but Akira Narahashi scored Antlers' winner on the break midway through the second half. This performance bodes well for Antlers' new season. They followed it up midweek with a 10-0 (14-2 aggregate) crushing of Sarawak in the Asian Club Championship quarter-finals, and went on to win their first two League outings, taking their winning streak in League games to 15.

"My players were tired from the training camp," said manager Ze Mario after the Super Cup, "but we got a goal at a good time and held on well to the finish. You have to be a bit defensive in this sort of game, and my players showed great mental strength."

Steve Perryman, manager of S-Pulse, was upbeat, too. "Despite losing, we've come a long way in a short time," he said. "We had a fantastic period of pre-season training and want to be champions. We have shown that nobody will have an easy time against us."

S-Pulse underscored that point by winning their first two League outings, 3-1 at home to Verdy Kawasaki and 1-0 away to Bellmare Hiratsuka.

The club have just had five of their young players called up to Philippe Troussier's national squad – wing-back Masahiro Endo, stopper Toshihide Saito, sweeper Ryuzo Morioka, defensive midfielder Kazuaki Tasaka (just signed from Bellmare Hiratsuka) and all-purpose midfielder Teruyoshi Ito.

Stojkovic's goal against Avispa Fukuoka, a rare header, was enough to give Grampus victory. However, despite their big close-season signings, the club have not found a rhythm. They slumped 3-2 to Gamba Osaka the following week, the decider coming two minutes from the end of extra time.

This year there is still sudden-death extra time if scores are level after 90 minutes, but there is no penalty shoot-out after that. There are three points for a win in 90 minutes, two for a win in extra time, and one for a draw.

Yokohama F Marinos, the new club formed by the merging of Marinos and Flugels, started with two wins, 2-0 against Bellmare and 3-1 away to Kyoto Purple Sanga. The handful of Flugels players who have reinforced the already strong Marinos side were quick to make their mark. Atsuhiro Miura set up Hideki Nagai – another new face in Troussier's national squad – for the first goal against Bellmare, then Nagai made the second for Shoji Jo.

Kashiwa Reysol also made a strong start to the season, beating Purple Sanga 1-0 at home, despite having Stoichkov sent off for a second bookable offence. They then beat Avispa 4-1 away.

Early goal...Dragan Stojkovic

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New club faces problems

FOLLOWING the merger of the two Yokohama clubs to form Yokohama F Marinos, the city now has a new outfit called Yokohama FC, who will compete in the Japan Football League, effectively the Third Division.

The biggest names at the club are general manager Yasuhiko Okudera, formerly of Koln, and old Koln team-mate and former Germany international Pierre Littbarski. The team will play their opening game on April 25 at the Yokohama International stadium, where the 2002 World Cup Final is likely to be held. Citibank are providing partial sponsorship and Sky PerfecTV will broadcast all Yokohama FC matches.

Almost all the players have been signed from J.League clubs as a result of active canvassing by Okudera, and they include former national team defender Masahiro Endo. Yokohama have been given special dispensation to play in the JFL for one year on a trial basis, without having to fight their way up through the regional leagues. "It's difficult," says Littbarski, "because we have only six or seven weeks to prepare and don't have any equipment, training ground or kit."

Yokohama the Final favourite

THE VENUE for the 2002 World Cup Final should soon be known, with Yokohama and Saitama stepping up their campaigns for selection. JAWOC, the Japanese organising committee, decides in May which stadium it will propose to FIFA.

Yokohama International stadium (capacity 70,336) was completed in October 1997 and is now the home of Yokohama F Marinos. It is 15 minutes by bullet train from central Tokyo (plus a 15-minute walk).

Saitama stadium (capacity 63,060) is now being built, with completion due in July 2001. A new railway line will connect it to Tokyo's Shinjuku station. The stadium also is set to be used in the J.League by Urawa Reds and Omiya Ardija.

Saitama should have the better atmosphere, with the stands much closer to the pitch, but in terms of access Yokohama still seems the more popular choice.

In South Korea, battles over a stadium nomination are developing along different lines, as doubts grow about whether the country can, or should, build its promised 10 grounds for 2002 (let alone all the other infrastructural promises).

Despite the rapid economic recovery in South Korea, the Japanese government will lend it £2.5million for stadium construction through the Export-Import Bank of Japan. This is a politically significant gesture which raises further questions about the wisdom of the co-hosting decision.

Mike Plastow & Mishi Ichijima

ASIAN CLUB COMPETITIONS

Al Ain close to Cup triumph

AL AIN of the United Arab Emirates are favourites to win the Asian Champions Cup for the first time. They reached the semi-finals by beating 1991 champions Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia in the last match of the group stage. Moroccan international Rachid Daoudi inspired their 1-0 win, and it was from his free-kick that substitute Garib Harib scored the goal.

Victory was especially sweet for Al Ain's Romanian coach, Illie Blacci, who guided Al Hilal to last year's semi-finals before he was sacked.

Al Ain meet Japan's Jubilo Iwata in the semi-finals, to be staged in Tehran, with hosts Esteghlal facing Dalian of China.

● Talaba of Iraq will face Al Ittihad of Saudi Arabia, and Chunnam Dragons of South Korea will meet leading J.League side Kashima Antlers in the semi-finals of the ninth Asian Cup-winners Cup.

In the West and Central quarter-finals, Al Ittihad beat Pakhtakhor of Uzbekistan 4-0 on aggregate. Talaba went through by default because Kazma of Kuwait refused to play them for political reasons.

In the Eastern zone, Kashima Antlers thrashed Sarawak of Malaysia 10-0 in the second leg to go through 14-2 on aggregate. Chunnam also had an easy passage to the last four, beating Happy Valley of Hong Kong 7-1 over the two ties.

Azam Mahmood & Mohamed Chbaro

OCEANIA

AUSTRALIA

Viduka's cash helps Knights

SOUTH MELBOURNE enjoy a healthy five-point lead at the head of the Ericsson Cup table, while Perth Glory, Sydney United, Sydney Olympic, Northern Spirit and Adelaide City have consolidated their places in the top six. However, the side with most reason to celebrate at the current time are lowly Melbourne Knights.

Knights, whose support comes almost exclusively from Melbourne's Croatian community, have had the debt that previously threatened their continued existence wiped out as a result of former player Marko Viduka's much-publicised transfer from Croatia Zagreb to Celtic.

A sell-on clause was included in the deal when Viduka moved to Zagreb in 1995 and Knights therefore received £450,000 after the long-delayed completion of the gifted striker's shift to Celtic.

Paul Moon

NEW ZEALAND

Central begin in style

CENTRAL UNITED reinforced their status as favourites when defeating Manawatu 6-0 on the opening day of the North Island League. United's position is based, to a large degree, upon their securing the country's most exciting young talent, Tinoi Christie, from Napier City Rovers, winners of the last National League. Rovers have also lost their veteran midfield general Paul Halford. The former Derby County player has returned to England. Fears of a decline in Napier's fortunes following these departures were given substance when they were beaten 2-1 at home by Metro.

Twelve outfits feature in the North Island League, which finishes in September.

Paul Moon

IN BRIEF

Milan is Saudi's new man

THE SAUDI FA took a month and a half to convince coach Milan Macala to take the hot seat as manager of their team, after axing Germany's Otto Pfister in February.

But the appointment of the Czech, formerly in charge of Kuwait, came as a surprise to local pundits. They had been expecting a manager with a higher profile to be contracted, following recent talks with Dutchman Leo Beenhakker, Croatian Miroslav Blazevic and former France coach Aime Jacquet.

Saudi surprise...Macala

Macala will be the 28th manager of the Saudi team since 1980. His contract is for two years, to be extended should he prove a success. He had a fine record in his four years with Kuwait, leading them to victory in the Gulf Cup in 1996 and 1998, a third-place finish in the 1998 Arab Cup, the runners-up spot in this year's Asian Games, and the semi-finals of the 1996 Asian Cup.

Mohamed Chbaro

SAUDI ARABIA: Two clubs from Riyadh – Al Hilal and Al Shabab – and two from Jeddah – Al Ittihad and Al Ahly – made it to the last four of the play-off stage.
OMAN: Joint leaders Al Nasr and Dhofar top the table on 19 points each, after 12 weeks.
UAE: Outsiders Al Wahda are en route to clinch the title for the first time, thanks mainly to Malian striker Bouri Lah, who has scored 21 goals in 26 matches. The club lead Al Wasl by five points.
SYRIA: With six weeks to go, Al Jaish increased their lead to five points. However, they lost their chance of a second successive Double when beaten 3-2 in the Cup quarter-finals by Mouhafaza of the Second Division.
LEBANON: Ansar and unfashionable Salam Zghorta will contest the newly-introduced Federation Cup.

Mohamed Chbaro

THAILAND: The Brazil Under-20 side humbled North Korea 7-1 to clinch the four-nation King's Cup. The hosts defeated Hungary 3-1 to take third place.

Thailand prevailed over Malaysia for the right to host the 10-nation South-East Asian Championship for the Tiger Cup, to be held in 2000.

Azam Mahmood

INDIA: A total of 20 points from nine games was enough to give Salgaocar Sports Club the Indian National League title. A 1-0 win over Mohun Bagan meant that with a match to play they could not be caught. East Bengal finished second.

The outcome led to criticism of the Indian Football Federation's decision to play the closing six-club phase in only two venues, Calcutta and Margao. This enabled the two Calcutta clubs (East Bengal and Mohun Bagan) and the two from Goa (Salgaocar and Churchill Brothers) to play some of their games on their own ground, with the other clubs, JCT Mills and FC Cochin, at a disadvantage.

The IFA have appointed an Irishman, Roy Miller, as director of coaching, though he will continue to instruct India's leading club coaches. He has been a member of the FIFA technical committee for 11 years.

The Indian Army beat Bangladesh 1-0 to take the International Army title at Salt Lake Stadium, Calcutta.

G C Das & Bhasi Malaparamba

NEXT MONTH

FINAL SHOWDOWN

Barcelona, May 19
CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL
Birmingham, May 12
CUP-WINNERS CUP FINAL
Moscow, May 5
UEFA CUP FINAL

Exclusive interviews and expert analysis in the ultimate preview of the climax to the European season

PLUS

Roberto Mancini
Superstar in the spotlight

STAY AHEAD OF THE GAME WITH WORLD SOCCER

JUNE ISSUE ON SALE APRIL 30

Crossword

Win a Mitre Ultimax Fluo Flare – official match ball of the FA

Mitre has kindly donated an Ultimax Fluo Flare, the official match ball of the English Football Association, as first prize for this month's crossword. The first correct entry selected at random after May 7 will win the ball. Five runners-up will each win a copy of the book *Football Moods*, a photographic essay of the game. SEND YOUR ENTRY TO: MAY CROSSWORD, *World Soccer*, King's Reach Tower, Stamford St, London SE1 9LS.

CLUES ACROSS

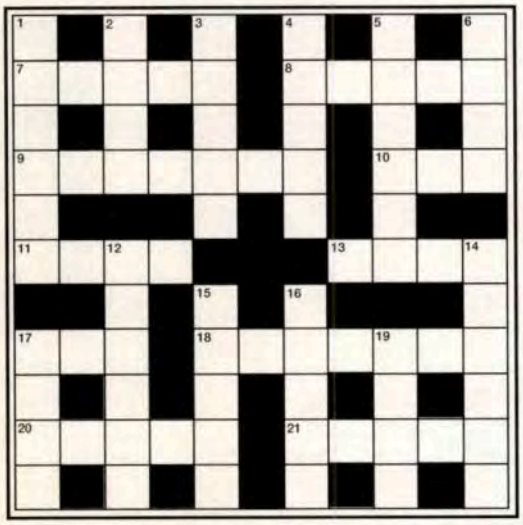
7 Austrian appointed Vietnam's coach in April 1998 (5)
8 La Coruna Moroccan voted Africa's Player of the Year 1998 (5)
9 Former Brazil forward who helped Corinthians to win the most recent national championship (7)
10 South Korean attacker recruited to Strasbourg (3)
11 Maldini's successor as Italy's national coach (4)
13 22-year-old Senegalese midfielder contracted to Monaco (4)
17 Cameroon international transferred this year from Lens to West Ham (3)
18 Team from which Oliver Bierhoff joined Milan (7)
20 Defender who switched from Schalke to Bayern last summer (5)
21 Former No 2 who followed 7 Across as Liechtenstein's boss (5)

CLUES DOWN

1 Hertha forward recently brought into the German national squad (6)
2 Ex-St Gallen coach now guiding Grasshopper (4)
3 Wroclaw club, Polish League champions of 1977 (5)
4 Losing finalists at the 1994 Asian Games (5)
5 Ghanaian international defender not much used at Lecce (6)
6 Atletico Madrid and Spain forward – a scorer in the 1992 Olympic Final (4)
12 Ex-Borussia Dortmund star now in England with Spurs (6)
14 French forward back home from Espanyol with Paris Saint-Germain (6)
15 Leading scorer at the 1998 World Cup finals (5)
16 Ex-Brescia forward in the Inter squad (5)
17 Senegal coach sacked following the defeat by Burundi in the African Nations Cup qualifiers (4)
19 Forward shipped out, as part of the Lens exodus, to Monaco (4)

APRIL SOLUTION

ACROSS: 1 Colomba, 7 Stone, 8 Reiss, 9 Sanchez, 10 Fernandez, 15 Ruggeri, 18 Villa, 19 Salou, 20 Srnicek.
DOWN: 1 Cerny, 2 Laigle, 3 Moss, 4 Asanin, 5 Toth, 6 Menzo, 11 Njegus, 12 Emelec, 13 Gross, 14 Frank, 16 Golz, 17 Ivan.



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Diary February/March 1999

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19

ACTION: Mexico win the Carlsberg Cup in Hong Kong, beating Egypt 3-0 in the Final; Bulgaria finish third, beating a host League XI by the same scoreline.
ARGENTINA: Striking players meet state President Carlos Menem again but still vote to continue their strike.
ENGLAND: Leeds say they will refuse to release their players for the World Youth Cup because they consider the health, safety and security risks too great.
FRANCE: Bordeaux midfielder Ali Benarbia is banned for two months for stamping on a linesman's feet after being sent off at the end of a 1-1 draw against Rennes.
SPAIN: Carolina Domenech, 22, is appointed to be fourth official at the Espanyol v La Coruna League match, the first time a woman has been awarded such a high-level role.
UNITED STATES: National coach Bruce Arena recalls veteran Robin Fraser to his squad for the game against Chile.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20

ACTION: Leaders Bayern Munich kick off after the winter break by defeating Duisburg 3-0.
WALES: FIFA's International Board decrees that, from next season, yellow cards will be automatically shown to any player cheating, diving or feigning injury. It also decides against experiments with goal-line technology, but agrees to extend the 'moving' free-kick experiment currently under way in Jersey; the kick-in experiment that has been operating in the Belgian Second Division is ended.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21

ACTION: Lazio beat Inter 1-0 to edge clear at the top in Italy, as challengers Fiorentina are held 0-0 by Roma.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22

BRAZIL: Evaristo de Macedo quits as coach of Flamengo.
CZECH REP: Kamil Jansta, former defender of Dukla, Boby Brno and Belgium's Beveren, dies from cancer aged 28.
NORTHERN IRELAND: The IFA launches a campaign to stamp out sectarian chanting at national team home games in a bid to attract more Catholics to Windsor Park.
PORTUGAL: Porto striker Mario Jardel is hailed as Footballer of the Year at the annual *A Bola* football gala in Lisbon. Lazio coach Sven Goran Eriksson receives the Victor Santos memorial award, and 1950s hero Jose Travassos a special prize for services to the Portuguese game.
SPAIN: Atletico Madrid forward Fernando Correa is ruled out for the rest of the season after being seriously injured at the weekend against Real Sociedad.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23

BRAZIL: Flamengo appoint Carlinhos as coach for the fourth time, in place of Evaristo de Macedo, who takes over at Corinthians from national coach Wanderley Luxemburgo…Palmeiras coach Luiz Felipe Scolari upsets his players by telling them they are too fat.
BULGARIA: Ex-international goalkeeper Bobby Mihailov is appointed technical director of Levski Sofia.
SPAIN: Barcelona forward Rivaldo says he has rejected an £18million offer from Manchester United.
UNITED STATES: MLS parts company with transfer supremo Sunil Gulati in a row over the extension of the contract of MetroStars midfielder Tab Ramos.

Sent off, fined and banned…Inter's Bergomi

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24

FRANCE: Bordeaux schemer Ali Benarbia has his two-month ban cut to three matches on appeal.
ITALY: Inter skipper Giuseppe Bergomi is banned for four games and fined £5,000 for his expulsion for dissent in the Cup defeat by Parma.
SPAIN: Real Madrid sack coach Guus Hiddink and pay Besiktas compensation of £375,000 to rehire John Toshack as his replacement.
TURKEY: Striker Kevin Campbell says he wants to quit Trabzonspor because of alleged racist insults by club president Mehmet Ali Yilmaz.

Dropped by Russia...Andrei Kanchelskis

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25

ACTION: Costa Rica thrash a weakened Jamaica 9-0 in San Jose...first round games in the Libertadores Cup see six expulsions.
FRANCE: Marseille go back to the top with a 1-0 win over Strasbourg as Bordeaux draw 0-0 against Nantes.
ROMANIA: Brescia striker Florin Raducioiu ends his two-year self-imposed exile from the national squad.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26

ACTION: Zambia defeat Guinea 6-2 to qualify for the semi-finals of the African youth championship, and thereby the World Youth Cup.
BOLIVIA: Marco Antonio Etcheverry denies police allegations of sexual misconduct.
ROMANIA: Hundreds of fans go on to the streets in sympathy as Galatasaray veteran Gheorghe Hagi flies home to Constanta after the death of his mother.
UGANDA: Express Red Eagles pull out of their CAF Cup tie against Medlaw Megbu of Eritrea because of a border dispute between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27

ACTION: Brazil's Under-20 team beat North Korea 7-1 in the Final of the King's Cup in Thailand... Cameroon qualify for the World Youth Cup when they reach the semi-finals of the African tournament...in Spain, John Toshack's first game in charge of Real Madrid brings a 3-2 defeat by Betis.
GERMANY: Police say they made 15 arrests after fighting between rival fans at Friday's 1-1 League draw between Kaiserslautern and Stuttgart.
RUSSIA: New national coach Oleg Romantsev drops Andrei Kanchelskis, Dmitri Kharine and Sergei Kiriakov from his squad for the Euro 2000 qualifiers against Armenia and Andorra.
SPAIN: Espanyol are ordered by the Spanish federation to play their next League game behind closed doors because of crowd trouble at last Wednesday's home Cup quarter-final second leg against Atletico Madrid.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28

ACTION: Zambia reach the World Youth Cup after making the last four of the African tournament...in Germany, Schalke and Hertha Berlin draw 0-0, rounding off a Bundesliga programme which saw a record low of 11 goals scored...Lazio stay four points clear in Italy by scoring a last-minute winner against Vicenza.

MONDAY, MARCH 1

ALBANIA: The players of top division side Burreli end a 10-day hunger strike. It had been staged to protest against a ground suspension imposed by the federation following hooligan problems.
GERMANY: Former national coach Berti Vogts formally takes up his new post as a director of his old club Borussia Monchengladbach.
ROMANIA: After five years of discussion, the federation agrees to reduce the top division from 18 to 16 clubs.

TUESDAY, MARCH 2

BELGIUM: Ajax Amsterdam agree to buy a minority stake in the soon-to-be-merged Antwerp club Germinal Beerschot.
ENGLAND: Chelsea's Graeme Le Saux and Liverpool's Robbie Fowler are charged with misconduct by the FA over their clashes during Saturday's League match.
FRANCE: Agent Ljubomir Barin tells a court that he helped Bordeaux attempt to bribe referees before Champions Cup matches in the 1980s.
GREECE: Panathinaikos dismiss coach Vassilis Daniel. Assistant Vangelis Vlachos takes over as caretaker.
PORTUGAL: Porto defender Paulinho Santos may miss the rest of the season after tearing ligaments in Sunday's top-of-the-table game with Boavista.
SWEDEN: Goalkeeper Thomas Ravelli, holder of the world record 143 caps, says he has decided to retire after returning home from MLS club Tampa Bay Mutiny.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3

ACTION: In the Champions League quarter-final openers, holders Real Madrid are held 1-1 at home by Kyiv Dynamo...Mali become the 24th and final qualifiers for the World Youth Cup.
ALBANIA: Bylis are fined £450 and ordered to play their next home match behind closed doors for failing to prevent hooligan violence at Sunday's 2-2 draw against Vllaznia.
ARGENTINA: An appeal court scraps the ban on lower division matches, thus clearing the way for an end to the three-week players' strike.
SPAIN: Barcelona's Nigeria winger Emmanuel Amunike decides to quit the game after failing to overcome repeated knee problems...a one-match home ban is imposed on Villarreal for crowd trouble during their weekend game against Espanyol.
UNITED STATES: San Jose release Chile World Cup midfielder Marcelo Vega.

THURSDAY, MARCH 4

CAMEROON: The federation tells West Ham midfielder Marc-Vivien Foe that he will receive compensation for the training injury that kept him out of the World Cup in France.
GERMANY: Bayern Munich's reserve goalkeeper, Sven Scheuer, is given a five-month suspended jail sentence and fined £18,000 by a Munich court for drink-driving.

FRIDAY, MARCH 5

FRANCE: Marseille's two-game home ground ban, imposed after fans threw firecrackers on to the pitch and invaded it during a French Cup game in January, is reduced on appeal to one game.
ITALY: Milan agree an £8m fee with Sao Paulo for left wing-back Serginho... Juventus sign Middlesbrough's 20-year-old Irish winger Ronnie O'Brien.
UNITED STATES: Goalkeeper Zach Thornton and midfielder Frankie Hejduk are late additions to the US squad for the US Cup games against Guatemala and Mexico.

SATURDAY, MARCH 6

ACTION: In Holland, Vitesse Arnhem lose their first home League match for two-and-a-half years, by 2-1 to Fortuna Sittard.
BRAZIL: Fiorentina forward Edmundo is sentenced, in his absence, to four-and-a-half years in prison for his part in a car crash in December 1995 in which three people died. The sentence, which would allow the player to work during the day but be locked up at night, is suspended while his lawyer prepares an appeal.
GERMANY: Hansa Rostock promote assistant coach Andreas Zachhuber after sacking coach Ewald Lienen.
POLAND: Three policemen are injured and trams, buses and train coaches are damaged in hooligan incidents in Czestochowa and Lodz.

SUNDAY, MARCH 7

ACTION: Paraguay win the Peace Cup in Guatemala City, beating Bolivia 3-0... hosts Ghana win the African Youth Cup, defeating Nigeria 1-0 in the Final...in Croatia, champions Croatia Zagreb return to the top with a 3-0 home win over second-placed Rijeka...Inter Bratislava go top in Slovakia after a 2-0 away win over Zilina.
ARGENTINA: The federation postpones Racing's game against Talleres on the opening day of the season in the hope that the club can stave off bankruptcy.
COLOMBIA: Twenty fans are injured as a railing gives way at the front of terracing at the Pascual Guerrero stadium in Cali after America take the lead against Deportivo Cali.
DENMARK: Police arrest 14 hooligans after fans of champions Brondby go on the rampage in Vejle after a 0-0 draw.

MONDAY, MARCH 8

ISRAEL: Hapoel Haifa's Ofer Talkar is called up as a late replacement for Haim Revivo in the national squad to face Romania.
SCOTLAND: The SFA dismisses chief executive Jim Farry over the delay in the transfer of Jorge Cadete three years ago which, Celtic claim, cost them the League title.
YUGOSLAVIA: Red Star are awarded a 3-0 win against Zemun Belgrade after Saturday's League match was abandoned when Zemun players attacked the referee.

Retirement...Emmanuel Amunike

TUESDAY, MARCH 9

HOLLAND: The mayor of Zwolle postpones the home town's Cup quarter-final match against Ajax because of fears about hooliganism.
SWITZERLAND: FIFA says it will conduct trials involving two referees officiating each match in 'top leagues' from next season.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10

ARGENTINA: The government promises to protect Racing from bankruptcy by putting through congress a bill declaring the club to be part of the country's 'national heritage'.
FRANCE: Red Star set a Second Division attendance record of 45,000 when they lose 2-1 to Saint-Etienne in a one-off League match at the Stade de France.
SCOTLAND: The Premier League signs a £3.75m sponsorship deal with the Bank of Scotland.
SLOVAKIA: Jozef Adamec is appointed new national coach after the surprise resignation of Dusan Galis.
SPAIN: More than 100,000 fans turn out in Barcelona for the Johan Cruyff testimonial; the current team beats a Cruyff All-Stars side 2-0.
UNITED STATES: The national team's record goalscorer, Eric Wynalda of San Jose Clash, is expected to be out of action for up to six months after undergoing surgery to repair torn knee ligaments.

THURSDAY, MARCH 11

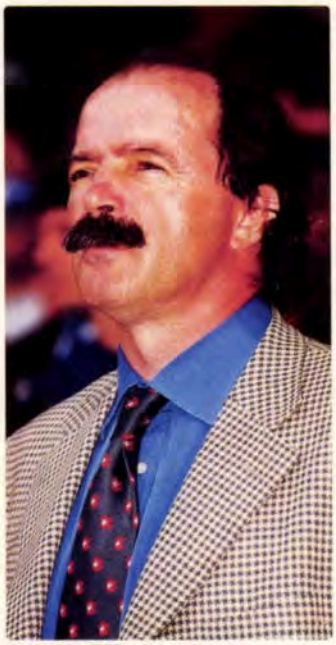
BRAZIL: Vasco da Gama protest that four of their players were attacked by police before their 1-0 win away to America in Natal in the Copa Brasil on Wednesday.

Bound for Parma...Salernitana's Di Vaio

ENGLAND: The country's bid to host the 2006 World Cup is helped when Wembley stadium accepts the £106m purchase offer from an FA-based consortium...Premier League chairman Sir John Quinton and chief executive Peter Leaver are forced to resign amid controversy over the award of TV negotiating contracts to two former BSkyB executives, Sam Chisholm and David Chance.
FRANCE: Marseille and Toulouse are fined £10,000 and £8,000 respectively because of hooligan trouble during their League game in February.
GERMANY: Hamburg say Sweden striker Martin Dahlin, on loan from Blackburn, is unlikely to play for them again after being ruled out for two months with back trouble.
ITALY: Parma agree to sign Salernitana striker Marco Di Vaio for £7m at the season's end.
PARAGUAY: The media demands the resignation of Cerro Porteno coach Jair Pereira after the side's 8-2 thrashing by Corinthians in the Libertadores Cup.
SWITZERLAND: FIFA's executive committee decides: 1) to institute random doping controls at friendly matches and training camps; 2) to authorise squads of 20 for the Confederations Cup in Mexico; 3) to stage the qualifying draw for the 2002 World Cup in Tokyo on December 7; 4) to stage the first World Club Championship between January 5-14 next year, probably in Brazil; and 5) to delay until congress in July the Asian confederation's demand for an increase to its allocated four places at the next World Cup finals.
TRINIDAD: It is confirmed that the country will host the inaugural Championship of Heroes – a competition for the over-35s – in June.

SATURDAY, MARCH 13

ACTION: Mexico win the US Cup, beating the hosts 2-1 in San Diego in the Final...Second Division Laval beat League champions Lens in the third round of the French Cup...Bayern Munich extend their lead in Germany, beating Hamburg 2-0, but may have lost Giovane Elber for the rest of the season because of a knee ligament injury suffered in a collision with the Hamburg goalkeeper.
FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain sack coach Artur Jorge and replace him with assistant Philippe Bergeroo... Bordeaux say they are negotiating additional financial investment options with ENIC and French television operation M6.


Sacked by PSG...Artur Jorge

SUNDAY, MARCH 14

ACTION: In France, Nantes beat Metz 3-1 in the Cup third round to become the only top division survivors in the quarter-finals.
HOLLAND: Feyenoord sign a three-year co-operation deal with Belgian Second Division side RWD Molenbeek.
ITALY: Police acting at the request of Turin dope inquiry prosecutor Raffaele Guariniello seize documents from the controversial Acqua Acetosa testing laboratory.
PORTUGAL: Benfica coach Graeme Souness needs a police escort to protect him from angry fans after his side crash 3-0 at home to Boavista.
ROMANIA: Albanian Albert Duro becomes the first foreign player to appear for Steaua Bucharest as they beat Universitatea Cluj 2-0.

MONDAY, MARCH 15

BELGIUM: Media Partners, the marketing company behind the proposed breakaway European Super League, tells the European Commission that it still wishes to pursue its plans.
BRAZIL: Pele appeals for foreign business partners to invest in an independent domestic 'super league' beyond the jurisdiction of the Brazilian federation.
CANADA: All the South American nations say they will refuse to compete in this summer's Pan American Games soccer tournament after local organisers say they will refuse to pay travel expenses.
GERMANY: Bayern Munich's Giovane Elber flies to the United States to undergo surgery on his injured left knee...Schalke complain after Arsenal sign Moritz Volz, the youth international hailed as one of Germany's best potential talents.
GUINEA: The African confederation decides that Ghana and Nigeria will co-host next year's African Nations Cup finals, in place of Zimbabwe.
SCOTLAND: Celtic appoint Allan MacDonald, currently managing director of British Aerospace's interests in Asia and Africa, as its chief executive, in succession to Fergus McCann. He will take over on June 30...the SFA fines Rangers coach Dick Advocaat £1,000 and 'severely censures' him for his touchline behaviour against Dunfermline.
SPAIN: Barcelona's Luis Enrique is told he will miss Spain's next two European championship qualifiers after injuring his right leg in Sunday's 3-0 win over Espanyol.
SWITZERLAND: UEFA's task force completes the Champions League redevelopment proposals, which will now go to the executive for approval.
UKRAINE: National coach Josef Sabo calls up 11 players from his ex-club, Kyiv Dynamo.

Compiled by Keir Radnedge

OBITUARY

DENNIS VIOLLET, one of the Busby Babes who survived the Munich air crash, has died in Jacksonville, Florida, aged 65. The former Manchester United captain played, surprisingly, only twice for England, but set a club record for most League goals in a season when he scored 32 times in 1959-60. He won a League championship medal in 1956 and 1957. In all he scored 178 goals in 291 first-team appearances for United between 1952 and 1962.

Viollet joined the club in 1950 and graduated from the nursery system installed by manager Matt Busby and which produced such players as Duncan Edwards and Bobby Charlton. Remarkably, he not only survived Munich but overcame his injuries in time to play in the FA Cup Final defeat against Bolton Wanderers three months later. After leaving United he played for Stoke and Baltimore Bays in the North American Soccer League before coaching clubs in England, Northern Ireland and the United States.

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World Service

Your complete guide to the month's stats and facts

INTERNATIONALS

Saturday, February 20

Gaborone – Cosafa Castle Cup
Botswana 1 (Selowane 13)
South Africa 2 (Ndlanya 36, Phiri 39)
HT: 1–2. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Marange (Zim)
Botswana: Manumo – Mosimanegape, Marman, Gabonamong, Ntshingase, Duiker, Paul (Thobega 69), Ranku, Kgope, Disanf (Radikara 60), Selowane.
South Africa: Baloyi – Mokoena, F McCarthy, Booth, Mngomeni, Moeti, Mukansi, Phiri (Gulwa 72), Mohlala, Ndlanya, Jordan.

Sunday, February 21

Fort Lauderdale – friendly
United States 2 (Olsen 58, Lewis 65)
Chile 1 (Cartes 64)
HT: 0–0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Rebolledo (Mex)
US: Thornton (Prestus 46) – Dooley, Brown, Llamosa, Lewis – R Williams (Cullen 86), Armas, Olsen, Deering (Mathis 66) – B McBride, Lassiter (Razov 46).
Chile: Marcelo Ramirez – Contreras, Rojas (Aros 80), Christian Acuna, Uribe (Neira 70; Villarroel 74) – Miguel Ramirez, Clarence Acuna, Pizarro, Cartes, Neira – Luis Mena, Navia (Moya 66).

Wednesday, February 24

Jerusalem – friendly
Israel 2 (Revivo 23, R Harazi 27)
Latvia 0
HT: 2–0. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Steinborn (Ger)
Israel: Davidowitz (Sheinsinger 46) – A Harazi (Benado 46), Ben Shimon (Keissi 79), Shelah, Graieb (Gershon 79) – Badir (Talesnikov 46), Abuksis (Zeitouni 67), Revivo, Banin – R Harazi (Tal 61), Sevilia (Shitrit 46).
Latvia: Kolinko – Stefanov, Astafaiev (Leisens 60), Zemlinskis, Lubano, Vas (Isakovas 67) – Facher, Ivanovas (Rubinas 80), Belagonadzins, Stolzers, Babichev – Micholpas (Blaidelis 54).

San Jose – friendly
Costa Rica 9 (Solis 1, 16, J Drummond 21, Fonseca 29, 45, G Drummond 51, 66, 82, Centeno 85)
Jamaica 0
HT: 4–0. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Roberto Moreno (Pan)
Costa Rica: Lonnis (Morgan 62) – Jervis Drummond, Parks (Row 46), Marin, Alfaro – Campos, Solis (Centeno 46), Soto (Gerald Drummond 46), Myers – Fonseca, Ledezma (Jara 62).
Jamaica: Lawrence – Powell (Scarlett), Waugh, Goodison, McDonald – Griffiths, Dawes, Malcolm, Whitmore (Bunsie 62) – Boyd, Harris (Fuller 68).
Sent off: Bunsie 77mins.

Saturday, February 27

Mabopane – African Nations Cup qualifier
South Africa 4 (Moeti 44, Masinga 50, Bartlett 57, McCarthy 80)
Gabon 1 (Nzue–Nguema 27)
HT: 1–1. **Att:** 50,000

Sunday, February 28

Luanda – African Nations Cup qualifier
Angola 0
Mauritius 2 (Perle, Bax)
Att: 25,000

Bjumbura – African Nations Cup qualifier
Burundi 1
Burkina Faso 2
Att: 8,000

Yaounde – African Nations Cup qualifier
Cameroon 1 (Mboma 25)
Mozambique 0
HT: 1–0. **Att:** 55,000

Pointe-Noire – African Nations Cup qualifier
Congo 1 (Ntounou 10)
Ivory Coast 0
HT: 1–0. **Att:** 12,000

Accra – African Nations Cup qualifier
Ghana 5 (Yaw Preko 27, 56, 84, Quaye 68)
Eritrea 0
HT: 1–0. **Att:** 50,000

Nairobi – African Nations Cup qualifier
Kenya 0
Zambia 1 (D Lota 9)
HT: 0–1. **Att:** 30,000

Monrovia – African Nations Cup qualifier
Liberia 1 Algeria 1
HT: 1–0. **Att:** 30,000

Antanarivo – African Nations Cup qualifier
Madagascar 3 (Kely 42, Fidy 64, Rasoanaivo 74)
DR Congo 1 (Mbaye 81)
HT: 1–0. **Att:** 35,000

Dakar – African Nations Cup qualifier
Senegal 1 (Keita 69)
Nigeria 1 (Akpoborie 75)
HT: 0–0. **Att:** 55,000

Lome – African Nations Cup qualifier
Togo 2 (Kossi 32, Goumai 63)
Morocco 3 (Hadda 2, 72, Hadji 39)
HT: 1–2. **Att:** 15,000

Tunis – African Nations Cup qualifier
Tunisia 6 (Kanzari 16, Jaidi 33, Boukadida 57, Selimi pen 60,Roussi 83, Gabsi 85)
Uganda 0
HT: 2–0. **Att:** 35,000

Wednesday, March 3

Stara Zagora – friendly
Bulgaria 2 (Iliyev 22, Iovov 41)
Slovakia 0
HT: 2–0. **Att:** 27,000. **Ref:** Radoman (Yug)
Bulgaria: Zdravkov – Kishishev (Antonov 74), Zagorcic, Stoianov (Naidenov 46), Yordanov, Yankov, Stilian Petrov (Kirilov 67), Petkov, Iliev (Borimirov 46), Iovov (Gruev 67), Todorov (Bachev 46). *Sent off: Yordanov.*
Slovakia: Kong (Susko 46) – Zeman (Uilaki 47), Karchan, Djurik, Varga – Zatek, Spiler, Tomasek (Pinte 61), Fabus (Krattochwil 46), Dubovsky (Prohaska 76), Majoros.

Warsaw – friendly
Poland 1 (Trzeciak 3)
Armenia 0
HT: 1–0. **Att:** 7,000. **Ref:** Sredak (Slk)
Poland: Matysek (Sidorczuk 46) – Klos (Waldoch 69), Lapinski, Zielinski, Siadaczka – Michalski (Czereszewski 66) – Hajto (Adamczuk 46), K Nowak (Czerwiec 46), Iwan – Juskowiak (Wichniarek 62), Trzeciak (Majak 46).
Armenia: Berezowski – Wardanjan – Sukiasyan, Mkrczyan, Owseyan – A Petrosyan, Admyan (Kakosyan 66), Shachgeldian (Ayrapetyan 80), Charuchinyan (Oganesyan 63) – Yesayan, Markosyan (T Petrosyan 46).

Bucharest – friendly
Romania 2 (Ganea 15, 78)
Estonia 0
HT: 1–0. **Att:** 16,000. **Ref:** Lica (Rom)
Romania: Lobont (Lung 87) – Contra, G Popescu (Haldan 82), Mitrita, Ciobotariu (Batranu 85), Lupescu, Serban (Trica 72), Munteanu, Danciulescu (Mihalcea 50), Rosu (Lutu 60), Ganea.
Estonia: Tohver – Smirnov, Hohlov–Simson, Terehhov (Alonen 75), Lemsalu, Kirs, Svets (Kristal 65), Saviauk, Reim, Zelinski, Viikmae.

Guatemala City – Copa de la Paz
Guatemala 2 (Alegria 19, Valencia 76)
Paraguay 3 (Peralta 70, Centurion 86, Caballero 89)
HT: 1–0. **Att:** 20,000
Guatemala: Estrada – Molina, Leon, Jimenez (Garcia), Ruano – Rodas (Rodriguez), Giron, Perez, Rojas – Ruiz, Alegria (Valencia). *Sent off: Ruano 82mins.*
Paraguay: Villar – Rolon, Ortiz, Acosta, Estigarribia – Jara, Centurion, Caballeros – C A Gonzalez (T Gonzalez), Gomez (Peralta).

Guatemala City – Copa de la Paz
Bolivia 0 Jamaica 0
Att: 15,000
Bolivia: Barrero – Ochoaizpur (Uriona), Sandy, Rimba, Sanchez – Soria, Ramos (Etcheverry), Coimbra – Sergio Castillo, Ivan Castillo, Suarez (Moreno).
Jamaica: Lawrence – Dawes, Malcolm (Scarlett), Waughn, Goodison – Griffith (Deer), Green, Davis (Chinsu) – Peterking, Withmore, Fuller (Curtis).

Friday, March 5

Guatemala City – Copa de la Paz
Paraguay 3 Jamaica 1

Guatemala City – Copa de la Paz
Guatemala 0 Bolivia 3

Sunday, March 7

Guatemala City – Copa de la Paz
Paraguay 3 (M Caballero 18, D Toledo 60, T Gonzalez 68)
Bolivia 0
HT: 1–0. **Att:** 25,000

Guatemala City – Copa de la Paz
Guatemala 2 (Jorge Perez pen 44, pen 62)
Jamaica 4 (Davis pen 1, pen 29, Fuller 11, Whitmore pen 43)
HT: 1–4. **Att:** 10,000

FINAL TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Paraguay	3	3	0	0	9	3	9
Jamaica	3	1	1	1	5	5	4
Bolivia	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Guatemala	3	0	0	3	4	10	0

Wednesday, March 10

Athens – friendly
Greece 3 (Yannakopoulos 12, 55, Nikolaidis 86)
Croatia 2 (Vlaovic 68, Suker pen 80)
HT: 1–0. **Att:** 10,000
Greece: Atmatsidis – Kostandinidis (Poursanidis 71), Ouzounidis, Goumas, Kalitzakis (Anatolakis 83), Markos, Zagorakis, Yannakopoulos (Konstandinidis 59), Georgatos (Konstandinidis 59), Liberopoulos (Anastasiou 87), Nikolaidis.
Croatia: Ladic – Saric, Jarni, Soldo, Juric (Cvitanovic 61), Milinovic, Asanovic (Agic 61), Tokic, Suker, Boban, Peternac (Vlaovic 46).

Budapest – friendly
Hungary 1 (Illes pen 66)
Bosnia 1 (Kodro 31)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 7,792. **Ref:** Ingvarsson (Swe)
Hungary: Kiraly – Hrutka, Korsos, Szekeres, Sebok, Somogyi, Sztipanovics (Zoltan Kovacs 85), Dardai (Pisont 46), Feher (Dombi 57), Illes, Egressy (Norbert Toth 51).
Bosnia: Dedic – Smajic (Mulacic 55), Mujdza, Konjic, Hibic, Repuh, Durkovic (Sabic 88), Kodro (Muratovic 46), Mujcin (Jolovic 73), Ihtijarevic, Topic (Avdric 85).

Luxembourg – friendly
Luxembourg 1 (Christophe 23)
Iceland 2 (Gunnlaugsson pen 75, Sigurdsson 87)
HT: 1–0. **Att:** 2,500

Valletta – friendly
Malta 0
Moldova 2 (Epureanu 73, Souharev 87)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,000

Bucharest – friendly
Romania 0
Israel 2 (R Harazi 17, Badir 64)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 8,000
Romania: Stelea – Petrescu, Selymess (Rosu 71), Ciobotariu, Galca, Lupescu, Contra, D Munteanu, Moldovan (Ganea 67), Craioveanu (C Munteanu 62), A Ilie.
Israel: Davidovitsh – A Harazi (Talkar 81), Shelah, Ben Shimon, Benado, Grayeb, Banin, Nimni (Tal 73), Badir (Talasnikov 82), Berkovic (Tikva 33), R Harazi (Sivilia 81).

St Gallen – friendly
Switzerland 2 (Vogel pen 24, Feiersinger og 50)
Austria 4 (Herzog 4, pen 57, Neukrichner 33, Reinmayr 44)
HT: 1-3. **Att:** 9,000
Switzerland: Hilfiker – Yakin (Wolf 38), Hodel, Jeanneret, Lonfat, Vogel, Sforza, Fournier, Sesa (Muller 79), Chapuisat (Rey 59), Comisetti (Buehlmann 65).
Austria: Wohlfahrt – Feiersinger – Schottel, Kogler – Cerny, Neukirchner (Schopp 57), Maehlich, Reinmayr (Stoeger 75), Prosenik – Herzog – Haas (Mayrleb 46).

Thursday, March 11

Los Angeles – US Cup
United States 3 (Moore 22, McBride 37, Hejduk 94)
Guatemala 1 (Perez pen 51)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Robles (Mex)
US: Thornton – Brown, Llamosa, Agoos, Lewis, Williams, Moore, Olsen (Hejduk 63), Kirovski, Razov (Armas 60), McBride.
Guatemala: Estrada – Giron, Ruano, Leon (Molina 51), Valencia, Machon, Perez, Ortega, Miranda, Rojas, Ruiz (Rodas 46).

Los Angeles – US Cup
Mexico 2 (Sanchez 54, 60)
Bolivia 1 (Ochoaizpur 4)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 34,154. **Ref:** Weyland (US)
Mexico: Rios – Sanchez, Suarez, Pardo (Lara 67), Carmona (Garcia 79), Zepeda, Cabrera (Garcia Aspe 46), Chavez (Ramon Ramirez 46), Blanco, Hernandez (Villa 88), Abundis.
Bolivia: Barrero – Ochoaizpur (Uriona 90), Sandy, Ivan Castillo, Sanchez, Pena, S Castillo (Ramos 82), Etcheverry, Cristaldo, Moreno (J Berthy Suarez 78), Coimbra.

Saturday, March 13

San Diego – US Cup Final
United States 1 (Hejduk 51)
Mexico 2 (Fraser og 17, Abundis 57)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 55,000. **Ref:** Parra (Can)
US: Meola (Thornton 17) – Agoos, Fraser, Pope (Olsen 68), Regis, Lewis (Mathis 83), Armas, Kirovski, Hejduk, Jones, McBride.
Mexico: Perez – Joel Sanchez, Pardo, Carmona (Zepeda 46), Beltran, Lara, Garcia Aspe, Garcia (Ramon Ramirez 60), Blanco (Luis Hernandez 46), Palencia (Chavez 57), Abundis (Pelaez 77).

San Diego – US Cup 3rd place play-off
Guatemala 2 (Perez 18, Valencia 26)
Bolivia 1 (Miranda 49)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 55,000. **Ref:** Hall (US)
Guatemala: Englenton – Jose Molina (Catalino Molina 46), Caceras, Perez, Rafael, Rojas (Ruiz 78), Ortega, Ruano, Valencia (Miranda 67), Rodas, Machon.
Bolivia: Barrero – Sandy (Farrah 46), Cristaldo, Sergio Castillo (Ramos 46), Etcheverry, Coimbra, Liendo (Rea 46), Pena, Jiguchi (Rojas 46), Suarez, Ivan Castillo (Virona 46).

Sunday, March 14

Shanghai – friendly
China 1 (Junzhe 78)
Iran 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 45,000

Wednesday, March 17

San Jose, Costa Rica – Central American Cup
Costa Rica 7
Belize 0

San Jose, Costa Rica – Central American Cup
Guatemala 1
Nicaragua 0

Friday, March 19

San Jose, Costa Rica – Central American Cup
Honduras 5 Belize 1

San Jose, Costa Rica – Central American Cup
Guatemala 1 El Salvador 1

Saturday, March 20

Tbilisi – friendly
Georgia 0
Ukraine 1 (Konovalov 77)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Kazaryan (Arm)
Georgia: Grishikashvili – Balashvili, Tarkhnishvili, Kaladze, Tsereteli, Chkhaidze, Nemsadze (Gakhokidze 75), Kobiashvili, Dzhanashia (Alexidze 25), Demetradze, Potskhveria (Ashvetia 54).
Ukraine: Vorobyev (Shovkovskyi 46) – Mykitin, Holovko (Vashchyuk 46), Popov, Koval, Kardash (Husin 46), Kiryukhin, Kalitvintsev (Konovalov 46), Kovalev, Skachenko (Myzin 80), Nagornyak (Tsykhmeistruk 74).

Sunday, March 21

San Jose, Costa Rica – Central American Cup
Costa Rica 0 Honduras 1

San Jose, Costa Rica – Central American Cup
El Salvador 1 Nicaragua 0

Wednesday, March 24

San Jose, Costa Rica – Central American Cup
Honduras 3 El Salvador 1

San Jose, Costa Rica – Central American Cup
Costa Rica 1 Guatemala 0

Friday, March 26

San Jose, Costa Rica – Central American Cup
Guatemala 1 El Salvador 0

San Jose, Costa Rica – Central American Cup
Honduras 2 Costa Rica 1

Guimaraes – Euro 2000 qualifier, Gp 7
Portugal 7 (Sa Pinto 28, Joao Pinto 36, 77, Paulo Madeira 67, Sergio Conceicao 75, Pauleta 82, 83)
Azerbaijan 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Granat (Pol)
Portugal: Vitor Baia (Pedro Espinha 77) – Secretario, Paulo Madeira, Fernando Couto, Dimas – Paulo Sousa, Rui Costa (Pedro Barbosa 88), Sergio Conceicao, Luis Figo (Pauleta 73), Sa Pinto, Joao Pinto
Azerbaijan: Kramarenko – Abushev, Akhmedov, Agayev, Stukas, Asadov, Musaev (Rzaev 69), Syrkhayev, Lychkin, Gurbanov, Gambarov (Vasilyev 72). *Sent off: Abushev 66mins.*

Saturday, March 27

Andorra La Vella – Euro 2000 qualifier, Gp 4
Andorra 0
Iceland 2 (Sverrisson 58, Adolfsson 67)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 1,400. **Ref:** Agius (Mlt)
Andorra: Alvarez – Ramirez (Gonzalez 77), Garcia, Martin, Toni Lima, Ildefunso Lima, Pol, Sonejee, Jimenez (Sanchez 73), Lucendo, Ruiz (Imbernon 83).
Iceland: B Kristinsson – Helgason, Gunnarsson (Hreidarson 70), S Jonsson, Adolfsson, S Kristinsson, A Gunnlaugsson (Gudmundsson 81), Sverrisson (A Gretarsson 70), Thordarsson, Gudjonsson, Sigurdsson.

Yerevan – Euro 2000 qualifier, Gp 4
Armenia 0
Russia 3 (Karpin 7, pen 63, Beschastnykh 89)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 20,000
Armenia: Berezovsky – Mkrtychyan, Karbanyan (Arutyunyan 65), Hovsepyan, Oganesyan, Vardanyan, A Petrosyan, Voskanyan (Kakosyan 78), Sarkisyan, Shakhgeldyan, Mikaelyan (Yesayan 81).
Russia: Filimonov – Khlestov, Drozdov, Tsymbalar, Yanovsky, Alenichev (Tikhonov 65), Onopko, Karpin, Titov, Yuran (Khokhlov 85), Panov (Beschastnykh 45).

Minsk – Euro 2000 qualifier, Gp 1
Belarus 0
Switzerland 1 (Fournier 72)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 35,000
Belarus: Tumilovich – Yakhimovich, Lavrik, Lukhvich, Gerashchenko (Skripchenko 85), Gurenko, Khatskevich, Romashchenko, Belkevich, Makovsky (Ostrovsky 86), Baranov (Chaika 59).
Switzerland: Brunner – Jeanneret, Sournier, Henchoz, Hodel, Vogel, Sesa (De Napoli 73), Wicky (Muller 66), Chapuisat, Sforza, Comisetti.

Brussels – friendly
Belgium 0
Bulgaria 1 (Iovov 10)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 23,412. **Ref:** Messina (Ita)
Belgium: Gaspercic – Genaux (Deflandre 75), De Brul, De Boeck, Leonard, Baseggio (Janssens 51), Wilmots, Walem, Luis Oliveira (M Mpenza 81), E Mpenza (Van Houdt 81), Martens.
Bulgaria: Zdravkov – Kishishev, Markov, Stoyanov (Petkov 74), Yordanov, Kirilov, Petrov (Grouev 79), Stoichkov (Ivanov 28), Iovov (Todorov 66), Petkov (Nikolov 71), Iliev (Borimirov 56).

Teplice – Euro 2000 qualifier, Gp 9
Czech Republic 2 (Hornak 10, Berger 74)
Lithuania 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 14,658
Czech Rep: Smicek – Repka, Suchoparek, Nedved, Hornak, Hasek, Nemec, Poborsky (Kuka 63), Lokvenc (Koller 71), Smicer (Baranek 80), Berger
Lithuania: Stauce – Skerla, Zutautas, Semberas, Vainoras, Zvirgzdauskas, Mikalajunas, Ivanauskas (Buitkus 83), Preiksaitis, Skarbalius, Jankauskas (Zvingilas, 67).

Copenhagen – Euro 2000 qualifier, Gp 1
Denmark 1 (Sand 58)
Italy 2 (Inzaghi 1, Conte 70)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 41,429. **Ref:** Lopez Nieto (Spa)
Denmark: Schmeichel – Goldbaek (Colding 85), Henriksen, Hogh, Heintze, Helveg, Nielsen (Tofting 79), Thomsen, Groenkjaer (Molnar 55), Jorgensen, Sand.
Italy: Buffon – Panucci, Maldini, Di Biagio, Cannavaro, Nesta, Fuser (Conte 46), D Baggio, Inzaghi, Chiesa (Totti 65), Di Francesco.

Wembley – Euro 2000 qualifier, Gp 5
England 3 (Scholes 11, 21, 70)
Poland 1 (Brzeczek 29)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 73,836. **Ref:** Melo Pereira (Por)
England: Seaman – G Neville, Le Saux, Sherwood, Keown, Campbell, Beckham (P Neville 78), Scholes (Redknapp 82), Shearer, Cole, McManaman (Parlour 69).
Poland: Matysek – Bak, Lapinski, Ratajczyk, Zielinski, Hajto, Swierczewski (Klos 46), Iwan, Siadaczki (Kowalczyk 64), Brzeczek, Trzeciak (Juskowiak 82).

Paris St Denis – Euro 2000 qualifier, Gp 4
France 0 Ukraine 0
Att: 78,500
France: Barthez – Thuram, Desailly, Blanc, Lizarazu – Deschamps, Petit (Boghossian 78) – Pires (Dhorasoo 85), Djorkaeff – Anelka, Dugarry (Wiltord 69).
Ukraine: Shovkovsky – Luzhny, Holovko, Vaschuk, Mykitin – Husin (Skrypnyk 86), Popov, Kovalyov (Kosovsky 55) – Skachenko (Maximov 69), Shevchenko, Rebrov.

Tbilisi – Euro 2000 qualifier, Gp 2
Georgia 1 (Dzhanashia 42)
Slovenia 1 (Zahovic 52)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 20,000
Georgia: Grishikashvili – Kaladze, Balashvili, Chkhaidze, Tsereteli, Alexidze (Kinkladze 46), Nemsadze, Dzhamarauli (Daraselia 82), Kobiashvili, Dzhanashia, Demetradze (Kavelashvili 74).
Slovenia: Simeunovic – Bulajic, Karic, Milanic, Knavs, Milinovic, Rudonja (Mitrakovic 89), Ceh, Udovic (Acimovic 60), Zahovic, Pavlin (Istenic 78).

Athens – Euro 2000 qualifier, Gp 2
Greece 0
Norway 2 (Solskjaer 38, 87)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 50,000. **Ref:** Irvine (NI)
Greece: Amatsidis – Markos (Machlas 55), Ouzounidis, Dabizas, Anatolakis, Poursanidis, Zagorakis (Mavrogenidis 46), Yannakopoulos, Georgatos, Liberopoulos (Frantzeskes 75), Nikolaidis.
Norway: Myhre – Heggem, Johnsen, Berg, Bergdolmo (Halle 65), Strand (Bohinen 60), Mykland, Solbakken, Iversen, Solskjaer (Carew 89), Rudi.

Budapest – Euro 2000 qualifier, Gp 7
Hungary 5 (J Sebok 17, V Sebok 33, 42, 86, Illes 74)
Liechtenstein 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 9,534. **Ref:** Kapitanis (Cyp)
Hungary: Kiraly – Hrutka (Somogyi 79), Korsos, Matyus, V Sebok – Halmai, J Sebok (Dombi 71), Pisont, Feher, Illes, N Toth (Hamar 76).
Liechtenstein: Jehle – Hanselmann (Hefti 46), Martin Stocklasa, Lingg, Ritter – Michael Stocklasa, Wohlwend, M Frick, Hasler – Telser, Beck (Ospelt 78).

Belfast – Euro 2000 qualifier, Gp 3
Northern Ireland 0
Germany 3 (Bode 11, 42, Hamann 62)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 14,270. **Ref:** Cesari (Ita)
N Ireland: Taylor – Patterson, Horlock, Lomas, Williams, Morrow, Gillespie (McCarthy 83), Lennon (Sonner 68), Dowie, M. Hughes, Rowland (Kennedy 68).
Germany: Kahn – Babbel, Heinrich, Worns, Strunz, Jeremies, Neuville (Janker 68), Hamann, Bierhoff, Matthaus (Nowotny 46), Bode (Preetz 77).

Bucharest – Euro 2000 qualifier, Gp 7
Romania 0 Slovakia 0
Att: 15,000
Romania: Stelea – Petrescu, Rosu, Batranu, Galca, Gheorghe Popescu, Petre, D Munteanu, Moldovan (Craioveanu 64), C Munteanu (Lupescu 66), Adrian Ilie.
Slovakia: Konig – Zeman, Karhan, Kratochvil, Varga, Zatek (Dzurik 75), Balis, Tomaschek, Labant, Dubovski (Suchancok 78, Majoros (Sicho 62). *Sent off: Labant 77mins.*

Valencia – Euro 2000 qualifier, Gp 6
Spain 9 (Raul 5, 17, 48, 73, Urzaiz 29, 45, Hierro 35pen, Wetl og 76, Fran 85)
Austria 0
HT: 5-0. **Att:** 45,000. **Ref:** Veissiere (Fra)
Spain: Canizares – Michel Salgado, Hierro, Marcelino, Sergi – Guardiola, Fran, Valeron (Mendieta 70) – Etxeberria (Dani 79), Urzaiz (Munitis 60), Raul.
Austria: Wohlfahrt – Feiersinger (Kogler 53), Pfeffer, Schottel, Cerny, Mahlich, Prosenik (Reinmayr 57), Neukirchner, Wetl, Herzog, Haas (Mayrleb 68).

Gothenburg – Euro 2000 qualifier, Gp 5
Sweden 2 (Mjallby 35, Larsson 87)
Luxembourg 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 37,728. **Ref:** Melnychuk (Ukr)
Sweden: Hedman – Kamark (Lucic 68), P Andersson, Bjorklund, Sundgren, Schwarz, Alexandersson, Mjallby, Ljungberg (D Andersson 79), Larsson, K Andersson.
Luxembourg: Felgen – Ferron, Funck, Birsens, Strasser, Saibene (Deville 89), Theis (Holtz 69), Vanek, Deville, Cardoni, Christophe (Zaritski 81).

Istanbul – Euro 2000 qualifier, Gp 3
Turkey 2 (Hakan Sukur 34, Yalcin 90)
Moldova 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Plautz (Aut)
Turkey: Rustu – Fatih, Ogun, Tayfur, Alpay, Abdullah Ercan, Okan, Tugay (Ayhan 85), Hakan Sukur, Yalcin, Oktay (Hami 9; Arif 74).
Moldova: Dinov – Fistican, Rebeja, Tabanov, Guzun, Stroenko, Shishkin, Stratulat, Gaidamashchyuk, Epureanu, Kleshchenko (Sukharev 81). *Sent off: Shiskhin 60.*

Sunday, March 28

Tel Aviv – Euro 2000 qualifier, Gp 6
Israel 3 (Banin, 11, A Mizrahi 47, 53)
Cyprus 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Lica (Rom)
Israel: Davidovich – A Harazi, Grayeb, Shelah, Badir (Talkar 46), Benado, Banin, Revivo (Tikva 85), Berkovic, R Harazi (A Mizrahi 46), Nimni.
Cyprus: Panayiotou – Theodotou, Pittas, D Ioannou, Charalambous, Melanarkitis, Constantinou (Okkas 65), Spoljaric (Agathocleous 79), Sofocleous, Malekkos (Nicolau 46), Christodolou.

Seoul – friendly
South Korea 1 (Kim Do-hoon 90)
Brazil 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 75,000

OTHER INTERNATIONALS

MERIDIAN CUP (U-17s)

Cape Town – Final
Spain 2 (Tetteh og 2, Aganzo 29)
Ghana 1 (Borty 36)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 3,500.

Third place play-off
Portugal 0
Egypt 0
Att: 2,000.
Portugal won 3-1 on pens.

KING'S CUP

Feb 27 – Bangkok – Final
Brazil U-20 7 (Moreira 12, Schmidt 20, 74, Santos 40, Gral 60, Neves Pereira 71, 89)
North Korea 1 (Chon Kwon 30)
HT: 3-1. **Att:** 25,000

Feb 27 – Bangkok – third place play-off
Thailand 3 (Atcharayothin 60, 72, Chaiman 64)
Hungary XI 1 (Jovanovic 5)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 25,000

EUROPE

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

QTR-FINALS – 1ST LEGS (Mar 3)

Bayern Munich 2 (Elber 31, Effenberg 35)
Kaiserslautern 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 54,000. **Ref:** Levnikov (Rus)
Bayern: Kahn – Babbel, Lizarazu, Strunz (Zickler 75), Linke, Matthaus (Tarnat 46), Effenberg, Basler (Salihamzic 83), Jeremies, Jancker, Elber.
Kaiserslautern: Reink – Ballack, Ramzy, Wagner, Sforza, Reich, Hrutka (Koch 69), Rische (Samir 73), Rosler, Buck (Ratinho 56), Riedl. Sent off: Ramzy 71mins.

Juventus 3 (Inzaghi 38, Conte 79)
Olympiakos 1 (Niniadis pen 90)
HT: 1–0. **Att:** 60,000. **Ref:** Garcia Aranda (Spa)
Juventus: Peruzzi – Mirkovic, Iuliano, Montero, Di Livio (Tacchinardi 90), Conte, Deschamps, Davids, Zidane, Fonseca (Birindelli 82), Inzaghi.
Olympiakos: Eleftheropoulos – Amanatidis, Anatolakis, Karataidis, Georgatos (Niniadis 90) – Mavrogenidis, Poursanidis, Karapialis (Alexandris 74), Giannakopoulos (Ivic 74) – Djordjevic, Gogic.

Manchester United 2 (Yorke 7, 45)
Internazionale 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 54,430. **Ref:** Krug (Ger)
Man Utd: Schmeichel – G Neville, Johnsen (Berg 46), Stam, Irwin – Beckham, Keane, Scholes (Butt 69), Giggs – Yorke, Cole.
Inter: Pagliuca – Galante, Bergomi, Colonnese – Zanetti, Cauet, Simeone, Winter – Djorkaeff – Zamorano (Ventola 69), Baggio (Pirlo 80).

Real Madrid 1 (Mijatovic 67)
Kyiv Dynamo 1 (Shevchenko 55)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Braschi (Ita)
Real Madrid: Illgner – Panucci, Hierro, Sanchis (Ivan Campo 58), Roberto Carlos – Redondo, Guti, Seedorf (Savio 58), Raul – Mijatovic, Morientes (Suker 76).
Kyiv: Shovkovskyi – Luzhnyi (Kirukhin 89), Vaschuk, Holovko, Kaladze – Khatskiavich, Husin, Bialkevich (Kardash 81), Kossovskyi (Korniltsev 84) – Shevchenko, Rebrov.

QTR-FINALS – 2ND LEGS (Mar 17)

Internazionale 1 (Ventola 63)
Manchester Unted 1 (Scholes 88)
HT: 0–0. **Att:** 79,528. **Ref:** Veissiere (Fra)
Man Utd won 3–1 on agg
Inter: Pagliuca – Bergomi (Moriero 69), West, Colonnese – Silvestre, Zanetti, Simeone (Ze Elias 32), Cauet – R Baggio, Zamorano, Ronaldo (Ventola 60).
Man Utd: Schmeichel – G Neville, Irwin, Stam, Berg – Johnsen (Scholes 76) – Beckham, Keane, Giggs (P Neville 81) – Cole, Yorke.
● Inter's Nicola Ventola, a substitute for the unfit Ronaldo, put Manchester United on tenterhooks just after the hour when he tucked the ball past Peter Schmeichel after Roy Keane had misjudged the bounce of Benoit Cauet's scooped pass. But resilient defending and Paul Scholes' late equaliser from an Andy Cole knock-down ensured a second appearance in three seasons at the semi-final stage. United had earlier survived two penalty appeals – from Ivan Zamorano and Ronaldo – as well as Javier Zanetti's fierce swerving shot which hit the post in the first half.

Kaiserslautern 0
Bayern Munich 4 (Effenberg pen 9, Jancker 22, 39, Basler 56)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 31,500. **Ref:** Meier (Swi)
Bayern won 6–0 on agg
Kaiserslautern: Reinke – Sforza, Hrutka, Koch, Ratinho (Roos 46), Riedl (Junior 60), Ballack, Wagner, Reich, Rosler (Jigwe 76), Rische. *Sent off: Hrutka 8.*
Bayern: Kahn – Matthaus – Babbel, Linke, Kuffour, Lizarazu – Jeremies (Fink 46), Effenberg (Scholl 46) – Basler (Salihamidzic 73), Jancker, Zickler.
● Bayern made much easier progress against Kaiserslautern in the second leg than the first, despite playing away from home. The *Lauterer* suffered a double blow after just eight minutes, when defender Janos Hrutka was sent off for a foul in his own box and Steffen Effenberg converted the resultant penalty. Then Carsten Jancker weighed in with two first-half strikes to put Bayern out of sight. Eleven minutes into the second period, Mario Basler rounded off the scoring.

Kyiv Dynamo 2 (Shevchenko pen 62, 79)
Real Madrid 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 80,000. **Ref:** Frisk (Swe)
Kyiv won 3–1 on agg
Kyiv: Shovkovskyi – Luzhnyi, Holovko, Vaschuk, Kaladze – Khatskevich (Belkevich 46), Husin, Kardash, Kossovskyi (Yashkin 85) – Shevchenko, Rebrov.
Real Madrid: Illgner – Panucci, Campo, Hierro, Roberto Carlos – Redondo, Sanchis (Guti 71) – Seedorf (Suker 67), Raul, Jarni (Karembeu 82) – Morientes.
● On a freezing night, Andrii Shevchenko knocked the Spanish holders out of the competition with two second-half goals. The first, in the 62nd minute, came after his penalty had been saved by Bodo Illgner. The young striker was quickest to the rebound to knock the ball home. Eleven minutes from time, Shevchenko sealed the tie after linking superbly with his strike partner Serhii Rebrov on a lightning counter-attack.

Olympiakos 1 (Gogic 12)
Juventus 1 (Conte 85)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 70,000. **Ref:** Merk (Ger)
Juventus won 3–2 on agg
Olympiakos: Eleftheropoulos – Karataidis, Amanatidis, Poursanidis, Yannakopoulos, Gogic, Djordjevic, Mavrogenidis, Anatolakis, Karapialis (Amponsah 78), Georgatos.
Juventus: Rampulla – Mirkovic, Montero, Iuliano, Di Livio, Conte, Deschamps, Davids, Zidane, Esnaider (Amoruso 69), Inzaghi.
● Juve's charmed existence in the competition continued thanks to Antonio Conte's 85th minute equaliser. Olympiakos had gone ahead on the night after just 12 minutes, when Sinisa Gogic headed firmly past Michelangelo Rampulla from a Predrag Djordjevic cross. That goal would have been enough to put the Greeks through, and they defended in numbers to cling on to their lead. The tactic seemed to be working for, with time running out, Juventus could not make their overwhelming possession count. Then Olympiakos keeper Dimitrios Eleftheropoulos fumbled the ball under pressure from Pippo Inzaghi, and Conte was on hand to send Juve through.

CUP-WINNERS CUP

QTR-FINALS – 1ST LEGS (Mar 4)

Chelsea 3 (Babayaro 9, Zola 30, Wise 85)
Valerenga 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 34,177. **Ref:** Benko (Aut)
Chelsea: De Goey – Ferrer, Lambourde, Desailly, Le Saux, Petrescu, Wise, Di Matteo, Babayaro, Vialli, Zola (Flo 46).
Valerenga: Kaven – Berntsen, Haraldsen, Kjoelner, Tran, Walltin, Riisnaes, Levernes (Simpson 85), Hovi, Haug (Kaasa 58), Carew.

Lokomotiv Moscow 3 (Dzhanashia 47, 77, 89)
Maccabi Haifa 0
HT: 0–0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Micel (Slk)
Lokomotiv: Nigmatullin – Arifullin (Cherevchenko 36), Drozdov, Sarkisyan (Kharlachyov 60), Solomatin (Lavrik 43), Tchugainov, Smertin, Gurenko, Dzhanashia, Loskov, Bulykin.
Maccabi: Davidovich – A Harazi, Benado, Keise, Hromadko (Duro 62), Nagar, Benayoon (Silvas 85), Zano, R Harazi (Patca 76), Melamed, Brzeczek.

Panionios 0
Lazio 4 (Stankovic 3, 60, Gazis og 14, Nedved 63)
HT: 0-2. Att: 15,000
Panionios: Strakosia – Gazis, Ioannidis, Bougas, Bakkerud, Haylock, Sapountzis, Roberts, Zachopoulos, Karasawidis (Robins 63), Tisdale.
Lazio: Marchegiani – Negro (Lombardi 27), Mihajlovic (Baronio 65), Nesta, Pancaro, Nedved, Lombardo, Stankovic, Fernando Couto, Salas, Vieri.

Varteks 0
Mallorca 0
Att: 10,000. **Ref:** Nilsson
Varteks: Mrmic – Kastel, Madunovic, Balajic, Gregoric, Hrman, Dalic, Muzek, Mumlek (Ivankovic 89), Karic (Matas 75), Kamberovic (Posavec 70).
Mallorca: Roa – M Soler, Siviero, Marcelino Elena, Carreras, Dani, Etame-Mayer, Olaizola, F Soler, Paunovic, Biagini (Chupa Lopez 81).

QTR-FINALS – 2ND LEGS (Mar 18)

Lazio 3 (Nedved 70, Stankovic 77, De la Pena 82)
Panionios 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Heynemann (Ger)
Lazio won 7-0 on agg
Lazio: Ballotta – Nesta, Mihajlovic (Crovari 71), Lombardi, Lombardo – Baronio, Fernando Couto, Nedved, Gottardi – Stankovic, De la Pena.
Panionios: Strakosia – Mitsiopoulos, Kamistis, Roberts – Gazis, Bakkerud (Bougas 69), Tisdale, Zachopoulos (Ioannidis 46), Robins (Haylock 60) – Sapountzis, Karasawidis.
● Lazio eased into the semi-finals with a comfortable victory over Panionios at the Olympic stadium. The 4-0 lead from the first leg, a situation that prompted coach Sven Goran Eriksson to leave many of his first-team players either on the bench or in the stands. Pavel Nedved opened the scoring after 70 minutes, volleying home Ivan De la Pena's curling cross. After Dejan Stankovic had added a second, Nedved and De la Pena combined again, this time the Spaniard scoring following a one-two with the Czech.

Maccabi Haifa 0
Lokomotiv Moscow 1 (Tchugainov pen 72)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 16,000. **Ref:** Dallas (Sco)
Lokomotiv won 4-0 on agg
Maccabi: Davidovich – A Harazi, Benado, Kesei, Kopel, Nagar (Duro 73), Benayoun, Janno, R Harazi (Katan 32), Patcha (Hromatko 62), Brzeczek.
Lokomotiv: Nigmatullin – Arifullin, Drozdov, Maminov, Lavrik, Tchugainov, Smertin, Gurenko, Dzhanashia, Loskov (Kharlatchev 46), Bulykin (Borochliouk 60).
● Lokomotiv reached the semi-finals for the second year running, defending in numbers to preserve their three-goal lead and killing off the tie with an away goal late on from the penalty spot. Maccabi struggled to make an impression up front after the departure through injury of striker Ronen Harazi in the 32nd minute, and things did not improve in the second half when the referee turned down two penalty appeals. He finally gave one after 72 minutes, but to Lokomotiv, for a foul on substitute Yevgeniy Kharlatchev. Libero Igor Tchugainov hit home from the spot to put the outcome beyond doubt.

Mallorca 3 (Ibagaza 53, Paunovic 55, Dani 75)
Varteks 1 (Balajic 88)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Wojcik (Pol)
Mallorca won 3-1 on agg
Mallorca: Roa – M Soler, Siviero, Marcelino, Olaizola – Ibagaza (F Soler 73), Engonga, Etame-Mayer – Biagini (Luque 61), Paunovic, Dani (Dominguez 81).
Varteks: Mrmic – Balajic, Madunovic (Sabolicki 46), Kastel – Hrman, Gregoric – Muzek, Mumlek, Dalic (Pasavec 59), Karic (Kamberovic 67), Ivankovic.
● The stalemate of the first leg continued in the first half of the return, with Mallorca unable to break down some resolute defending by the Croatians. After the interval, however, the dam burst. In the 53rd minute Ariel Ibagaza, left unmarked, headed the Spaniards in front from Leo Biagini's long pass. Two minutes later, Mallorca were further ahead, Veljko Paunovic playing a one-two with Dani before driving the ball into the net. Dani then got on the scoresheet himself, slaloming past two men and slotting home. Varteks defender Andrija Balajic got a consolation just before time, heading in from a corner.

Valerenga 2 (Kjolner 26, Carew 42)
Chelsea 3 (Vialli 13, Lambourde 15, Flo 32)
HT: 2-3. **Att:** 17,936. **Ref:** Ancion (Blg)
Chelsea won 6-2 on agg
Valerenga: Kaven – Berntsen, Haraldsen, Kjolner, Hai Ngoc Tran – Walltin, Hovi (Haug 77), Levernes, Riisnaes – Simpson (Thorsen 70), Carew (Musaeus 86).
Chelsea: De Goey – Petrescu, Babayaro (Myers 46), Wise (Newton 46), Duberry, Le Saux, Di Matteo, Flo (Nicholls 46), Vialli, Lambourde, Terry.
● Two early goals, from Gianluca Vialli and Bernard Lambourde, put beyond doubt the outcome of a tie that had looked a foregone conclusion after the first leg. With a five-goal advantage, Chelsea could afford to go easy on Valerenga, and the Norwegians took advantage of defensive slackness by scoring twice before half-time. Fredrik Kjolner headed home from a corner and then John Carew latched on to a back header by Chelsea defender Michael Duberry to score from a narrow angle. In between, though, Tore Andre Flo had added a third goal for Chelsea to put them beyond reach.

UEFA CUP

QTR-FINALS – 1ST LEGS (Mar 2)

Atletico Madrid 2 (Jose Mari 13, Roberto 46)
Roma 1 (Di Biagio 74)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 43,000. **Ref:** Sars (Fra)
Atletico: Molina – Aguilera, Santi, Chamot, Toni (Geli 87) – Roberto, Jugovic, Baraja, Serena – Juninho – Josi Mari (Lardin 72).
Roma: Chimenti – Cafu, Zago, Aldair, Candela (Wome 80) – Tommasi (Alenichev 67), Di Biagio, Di Francesco – Paulo Sergio, Delvecchio (Fabio Junior 67), Totti.

Bologna 3 (Signori 5, 49, Binotto 54)
Lyon 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 33,000. **Ref:** Durkin (Eng)
Bologna: Antonioli – Paramatti, Tarantino, Mangone, Bia – Fontolan (Cappioli 80), Marocchi, Ingesson, Binotto (Rinaldi 70) – Signori (Kolyvanov 87), K Andersson.
Lyon: Coupet – Brechet, Fournier, Laville, Carteron – Linares, Violeau (Cocard 55), Job, Bak, Dhorasoo – Caveglia.

Bordeaux 2 (Micoud 40, Wiltord 44)
Parma 1 (Crespo 85)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Melo Pereira (Por)
Bordeaux: Rame – Grenet, Saveljic, Alicarte, Ferrier (Jemmali 76) – Diabate, Pavon, Benarbia, Micoud – Laslandes, Wiltord.
Parma: Buffon – Thuram, Cannavaro, Sensini, Benarrivo – Fuser, Longo, Veron, Stanic (Vanoli 87) – Balbo (Crespo 73), Asprilla (Chiesa 63). *Sent off: Benarrivo 82mins.*

Marseille 2 (Maurice 33, 68)
Celta Vigo 1 (Mostovoi 64)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 60,000. **Ref:** Jol (Hol)
Marseille: Porato – Blondeau (Brando 78), Blanc, Domoraud, Gallas – Roy, Luccin, Pires – Dugarry, Maurice (Edson 86), Ravanelli (Camara 73).
Celta: Dutruel – Michel Salgado, Caceres, Djorovic, Josema Lopez (Eggen 69) – Karpin, Vales, Mazinho, Mostovoi (Tomas 86) – Penev (Juan Sanchez 55), Revivo.

QTR-FINALS – 2ND LEGS (Mar 16)

Celta Vigo 0 Marseille 0
Att: 32,000. **Ref:** Collina (Ita)
Marseille won 2-1 on agg
Celta: Dutruel – Michel Salgado, Caceres, Djorovic, Vales (Tomas Hervas 73) – Makelele, Mazinho – Karpin (Juan Sanchez 64), Mostovoi, Revivo – Penev (Gudelj 62).
Marseille: Porato – Gallas, Blanc, Domoraud, Luccin – Pires, Issa (Da Silva 80), Brando, Dugarry (Camara 87) – Bravo, Maurice (Guel 77).
● Vital saves from Stephane Porato coupled with a well-marshalled defence ensured Marseille's passage into the last four. Celta had to score at least one goal, and took the game to the French from the outset. But although Luboslav Penev and Alexander Mostovoi both had good chances, the Spanish team could not find the breakthrough. Ironically, it was Marseille's defensive orchestrator, Laurent Blanc, who had one of the best scoring opportunities of the night when beating the Celta offside trap after a first-half corner. However, he miscontrolled the ball and the chance slipped away.

Lyon 2 (Caveglia 16, Job 39)
Bologna 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Diaz Vega (Spa)
Bologna won 3-2 on agg
Lyon: Coupet – Carteron (Braizat 88), Laville, Fournier, Delmotte – Malbranque (Linares 65), Violeau (Bak 84), Dhorasoo – Cocard, Job, Caveglia.
Bologna: Antonioli – Rinaldi, Bia, Mangone (M Paganin 26), Paramatti – Binotto (Boselli 46), Ingesson, Marocchi, Nervo (Capioli 46) – Signori, K Andersson.
● An early goal from captain Alain Caveglia set the stage for an invigorating performance from Lyon as they looked to overcome a three-goal deficit from the first leg. Caveglia latched on to Steed Malbranque's whipped through ball, hitting it first-time past Bologna keeper Francesco Antonioli's legs. Shortly before the break, Cameroon forward Joseph-Desire Job made it two after picking up a headed knock-down from a free-kick and scoring from a tight angle. Lyon continued to pressurise in the second half, with Patrice Carteron hitting the post from a free-kick on the hour, but couldn't find a third. Bologna themselves went close late on, with Beppe Signori hitting the crossbar, but they had done just enough in the first leg to go through.

Parma 6 (Crespo 37, 66, Chiesa 43, 59, Veron 48, Balbo pen 89)
Bordeaux 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** R Pedersen (Nor)
Parma won 7-2 on agg
Parma: Buffon – Thuram, Sensini, Cannavaro – Fuser, D Baggio, Boghossian (Asprilla 81), Vanoli – Veron – Crespo (Fiore 72), Chiesa (Balbo 69).
Bordeaux: Rame – Alicarte, Saveljic, Grenet, Torres Mestre – Micoud, Pavon, Diabate (Musampa 68), Benarbia – Wiltord, Laslandes.
● Parma, 2-1 down after the first leg, swept into the semi-finals with an overwhelming victory over Bordeaux. Yet for the first half-hour, the French side had put them on the back foot, with Sylvain Wiltord having a rasping shot from distance punched away by Gianluigi Buffon. Parma's breakthrough came after 37 minutes, Argentinian Paolo Vanoli feeding his compatriot Hernan Crespo, who tapped home. Crespo's strike partner, Enrico Chiesa, made it two six minutes later with a 25-yarder. After the break, Parma were rampant. Juan Veron slammed in a free-kick through a crowded box, Crespo set up Chiesa for the fourth, and then the Argentinian striker got on the scoresheet again, taking down Vanoli's header before sliding it past Ulrich Rame in the Bordeaux goal. The rout was completed by a late Abel Balbo penalty – given against the unfortunate defender Nisa Saveljic who had caught the ball in the area believing he had heard the referee's whistle.

Roma 1 (Delvecchio 32)
Atletico Madrid 2 (Aguilera 59, Roberto 89)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 64,000. **Ref:** Van der Ende (Hol)
Atletico won 4-2 on agg
Roma: Chimenti – Wome, Aldair, Zago, Cafu – Di Biagio, Di Francesco (Fabio Junior 78), Alenitchev – Paulo Sergio (Candela 35; Tommasi 78), Totti, Delvecchio. *Sent off: Wome 28mins, Totti 90mins.*
Atletico Madrid: Molina – Chamot (Gonzalez 65), Santi, Toni, Aguilera – Serena, Jugovic, Mena (Roberto 57), Baraja (Njegus 57) – Jose Mari, Juninho.
● Roma briefly had their noses in front, for the first time in the tie, when Marco Delvecchio converted just after the half-hour. But second-half goals by Carlos Aguilera and Roberto put Atletico through. Roma had played with just 10 men for most of the match following Pierre Nlend Wome's first-half dismissal; they ended up with only nine, Francesco Totti going in the last minute for a second booking.

AUSTRIA

Saturday, February 27

SV Reid 2 (Anicic 11, Stanisavljevic pen 55)
Austria Wien 1 (Wagner 4) Att: 5,000

Tuesday, March 2

Vorwarts Steyr 0
FC Tirol 1 (Gilewicz 34) Att: 2,000

Friday, March 5

Linz ASK 0
Grazer AK 0 Att: 6,000

Saturday, March 6

Austria Wien 3 (Mayrleb 5, 25, Rachimov 53)
Salzburg 1 (Kitzbichler 9) Att: 6,000

Lustenau 1 (Prinzen 90)
Vorwarts Steyr 1 (Pavlek 28) Att: 7,000

Sturm Graz 4 (Schopp 11, Haas 31, Reinmayr 59, Martens 82)
SV Ried 2 (Anicic 61, Hujdurovic 75) Att: 10,000

FC Tirol 0 Rapid 0 Att: 6,000

Tuesday, March 9

Lustenau 0 SV Ried 0 Att: 7,000

Friday, March 12

Grazer AK 0
FC Tirol 1 (Gilewicz 89) Att: 8,000

Saturday, March 13

Rapid 2 (Schroll og 50, Purk 64)
Lustenau 1 (Tiefenbach 68) Att: 6,000

Salzburg 3 (Lipscei 37, Glieder 50, 87)
Sturm Graz 1 (Haas 72) Att: 8,000

SV Ried 1 (Jank 90)
Linz ASK 2 (Stumpf pen 45, Augustine 76) Att: 8,000

Vorwarts Steyr 1 (Grubor 4)
Austria Wien 3 (Wagner 10, 37, Mayrleb 59) Att: 4,000

Tuesday, March 16

Austria Wien 1 (M Wagner 45)
Rapid 1 (R Wagner 16) Att: 12,000

Linz ASK 0
FC Tirol 1 (Barisic 35) Att: 4,000

Lustenau 2 (Butrej 22, Pavao 55)
Grazer AK 1 (Akwuegbu 17) Att: 7,000

SV Ried 1 (Hujdurovic 70)
Salzburg 1 (Glieder 66) Att: 4,000

Sturm Graz 5 (Haas 22, pen 71, Mahlich 44, Kocijan 55, Reinmayr 80)
Vowarts Steyr 0 Att: 7,000

Friday, March 19

Salzburg 2 (Kitzbichler 26, Sabitzer 90)
Linz ASK 0 Att: 7,000

Saturday, March 20

Grazer AK 3 (Akwuegbu 38, Dospel og 40, Kulovits 46)
Austria Wien 0 Att: 6,000

FC Tirol 0 Lustenau 0 Att: 6,000

Vorwarts Steyr 2 (Pavlek 43, 62)
SV Ried 0 Att: 2,000

Sunday, March 21

Rapid 2 (Wetl 31, Purk 61)
Sturm Graz 0 Att: 12,000

AUSTRIA – TOP 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rapid Wien	24	15	6	3	38	16	51
Sturm Graz	24	16	2	6	48	19	50
Grazer AK	24	13	5	6	30	17	44
Linz ASK	24	12	4	8	36	28	40
Salzburg	24	9	7	8	34	31	34
Austria Wien	24	9	6	9	28	31	33

BELGIUM

Friday, February 26

Club Brugge 4 (Fadiga 3, Jankauskas 38, Ilic 60, Vermant 89)
Lokeren 0 Att: 18,000

Saturday, February 27

Beveren 0
Standard 6 (Godfroid 7, 29, De Conde 13, E Mpenza 28, 64, 87) Att: 4,000

Charleroi 1 (D Brogno 58)
Gent 1 (Degryse 22) Att: 7,000

Lommel 0
Eendracht Aalst 3 (Simons og 42, Cosimo 77, De Oliveira 80) Att: 3,000

Mouscron 2 (Casto 35, Vandooren 45)
Ostende 1 (Windels 12) Att: 7,000

St Truiden 1 (Mertens 57)
Anderlecht 4 (Baseggio 31, Iachtchouck 61, 89, Goor 90) Att: 10,000

Westerlo 0
Lierse 2 (Laeremans 7, Van Meir 77) Att: 9,000

Sunday, February 28

Ekeren 0
Harelbeke 2 (Paas 34, Baudry 71) Att: 2,500

Friday, March 5

Standard 2 (M Mpenza 13, 65)
Mouscron 0 Att: 14,000

Saturday, March 6

Anderlecht 3 (Selymes 36, Scifo 86, Radzinski 89)
Lommel 0 Att: 19,925

Genk 2 (Oulare 18, T Gudjonsson 27)
Charleroi 1 (Souza 77) Att: 14,510

Gent 4 (Degryse 41, 44, Martens 56, Nielsen 65)
Beveren 1 (Van Den Eede 15) Att: 7,000

Lokeren 1 (Koller 11)
Ekeren 1 (Vandervee pen 71) Att: 3,500

Ostende 1 (Edmilson 55)
Westerlo 1 (Janssens 17) Att: 3,000

Sunday, March 7

Eendracht Aalst 1 (D Cooreman 22)
Kortrijk 1 (F Staelens 33) Att: 4,000

Harelbeke 1 (Zvingilas 24)
St Truiden 1 (Ducoulombier 90) Att: 4,000

Lierse 5 (Somers 1, 38, Cavens 11, Van De Weyer 49, 55)
Club Brugge 2 (Jbari 45, 54) Att: 12,000

Wednesday, March 10

Kortrijk 1 (Stojanovic 62)
Genk 3 (Strupar 12, Oulare 65, T Gudjonsson 69) Att: 6,000

Lokeren 3 (Boeka Lisasi 43, Koller 59, Dias 80)
Westerlo 0 Att: 3,000

Friday, March 12

Mouscron 7 (Dugardein 14, Tanghe 28, Ban 42, 62, Vidovic 45, pen 73, Wuyts 59)
Gent 1 (C Roussel 89) Att: 8,000

Saturday, March 13

Anderlecht 2 (Baseggio 36, Iachtchouck 44)
Eendracht Aalst 1 (Baseggio og 43) Att: 21,097

Beveren 1 (Smid pen 70)
Genk 0 Att: 8,000

Charleroi 2 (Mane 62, D Brogno pen 73)
Kortrijk 1 (Joly 90) Att: 6,000

Ekeren 1 (Kovacs 76)
Lierse 1 (Huysmans 54) Att: 5,000

Lommel 0
Harelbeke 1 (Verhoeven 45) Att: 3,000

St Truiden 7 (Fiers 31, 37, 41, Teppers 52, Mertens 70, Rudonja 85, Dierickx 90)
Lokeren 0 Att: 6,500

Westerlo 3 (Afolabi og 12, Janssen 30, T Brogno 36)
Standard 1 (Bisconti 49) Att: 8,000

Sunday, March 14

Club Brugge 2 (Verheyen 75, Fadiga 90)
Ostende 0 Att: 10,000

Friday, March 19

Standard 3 (Cruz 29, M Mpenza 32, 37)
Club Brugge 0 Att: 18,000

Saturday, March 20

Genk 3 (Oulare 40, pen 77, Besengez og 90)
Mouscron 0 Att: 15,565

Gent 2 (Martens 15, Chatelle 89)
Westerlo 0 Att: 7,000

Lierse 6 (Van de Weyer 17, Daems 30, Cavens 32, 66, Zdebel 49, 77)
St Truiden 0 Att: 7,500

Lokeren 2 (Koller 45, Vidarsson 90)
Lommel 1 (Dekelver 50) Att: 3,500

Ostende 0
Ekeren 1 (Severeyns 58) Att: 3,000

Sunday, March 21

Eendracht Aalst 2 (Cosimo 2, 74)
Charleroi 2 (Van Buyten 56, Wuillot 76) Att: 3,500

Harelbeke 1 (Paas pen 15)
Anderlecht 2 (Iachtchouck 16, Baseggio 36) Att: 8,500

Kortrijk 1 (Demkine 2)
Beveren 0 Att: 4,500

BELGIUM – TOP 8

	P	W	L	D	F	A	Pts
Genk	27	18	5	4	59	29	59
Club Brugge	27	17	4	6	50	30	55
Anderlecht	26	15	5	6	52	35	50
Mouscron	27	14	7	6	61	42	49
Standard	27	15	2	10	49	30	47
Gent	27	13	8	6	48	47	47
Lokeren	27	13	5	9	52	48	44
Lierse	27	13	4	10	57	40	43

BULGARIA

Feb 26: Lok Sofia 1 Liteks 0.
Feb 27: Metalurg 1 Lok Plovdiv 0; Lev Kjustendil 3 Slavia 0; Pirin 1 Dobrudzha 0; Shumen 1 Spartak Varna 1; Botev 1 Minjor 1; CSKA 1 Neftohimik 1; Lev Sofia 2 Septemvri 0.
Mar 5: Slavia 1 Metalurg 0.
Mar 6: Lok Plovdiv 2 Septemvri 0; Neftohimik 3 Botev 1; Minjor 1 Lok Sofia 5; Litex 2 Shumen 0; Spartak Varna 2 Pirin 1; Dobrudzha 1 Lev Kjustendil 0; CSKA 2 Lev Sofia 3.
Mar 12: Lev Sofia 2 Lok Plovdiv 0.
Mar 13: Septemvri 0 Slavia 2; Metalurg 1 Dobrudzha 0; Lev Kjustendil 2 Spartak Varna 0; Pirin 1 Litex 2; Shumen 1 Minjor 1; Botev 2 CSKA 0.
Mar 14: Lok Sofia 1 Neftohimik 0.
Mar 20: Botev 0 Lev Sofia 1; Minjor 2 Pirin 1; Spartak Varna 3 Metalurg 0; Dobrudzha 5 Septemvri 1; Slavia 6 Lok Plovdiv 1; CSKA 2 Lok Sofia 0; Neftohimik 6 Shumen 1.
Mar 21: Litex 2 Lev Kjustendil 0.

BULGARIA – TOP 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Litex	19	14	3	2	54	13	45
Lev Sofia	19	13	4	2	39	11	43
Lev Kjustendil	19	12	1	6	38	16	37
Slavia	19	10	6	3	34	15	36
Lok Sofia	19	10	3	6	25	19	33
Neftohimik	19	10	2	7	32	21	32

CROATIA

Feb 27: Varteks 2 Croatia 0.
Feb 28: Hajduk 2 Osijek1; Zagreb 3 Sibenik 2; Rijeka 4 Zadarkomerc 1; Slaven 1 Hrvatski drag 0; Cibalia 2 Mladost 127 0.
Mar 7: Osijek 3 Cibalia 1; Mladost 127 0 Slaven 0; Hrvatski drag 0 Varteks 0; Croatia 3 Rijeka 0; Zadarkomerc 1 Zagreb 1; Sibenik 1 Hajduk 0.
Mar 14: Sibenik 2 Osijek 1; Hajduk 2 Zadarkomerc 0; Zagreb 1 Croatia 2; Rijeka 3 Hrvatski drag 0; Varteks 6 Mladost 127 0; Slaven 1 Cibalia 0.
Mar 21: Osijek 3 Slaven 0; Cibalia 3 Varteks 0; Mladost 127 1 Rijeka 2; Hrvatski drag 3 Zagreb 2; Croatia 1 Hajduk 0; Zadarkomerc 0 Sibenik 0.

CROATIA – TOP 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	22	17	2	3	44	14	53
Rijeka	22	17	1	4	35	18	52
Hajduk	22	12	6	4	38	17	42
Osijek	22	11	3	8	37	23	36
Varteks	22	8	4	10	37	34	28
Hrvatski drag	22	6	7	9	17	23	25

CZECH REPUBLIC

Feb 21: Chmel Blsany 3 Teplice 2; Dukla 1 Slavia 2; Ostrava 2 Liberec 0; Brno 4 Opava 1; Zizkov 0 Drnovice 1; Jablonec 1 Karvina 1; Sparta 2 Plzen 0.
Feb 22: Olomouc 1 Kralove 0.
Mar 1: Slavia 0 Ostrava 0.
Mar 7: Ostrava 0 Teplice 0; Dukla 2 Chmel Blsany 0; Kralove 3 Karvina 0; Jablonec 1 Opava 0; Olomouc 1 Plzen 1; Sparta 1 Drnovice 0; Zizkov 0 Liberec 3.
March 14: Dukla 0 Olomouc 0; Chmel Blsany 2 Ostrava 2; Teplice 3 Brno 0; Slavia 1 Zizkov 2; Liberec 0 Jablonec 1; Opava 2 Sparta 4; Drnovice 1 Kralove 3; Karvina 2 Plzen 3.
Mar 20: Kralove 1 Opava 0; Plzen 2 Drnovice 0; Ostrava 1 Dukla 2; Brno 1 Chmel Blsany 0; Zizkov 2 Teplice 0; Olomouc 2 Karvina 0.
Mar 22: Sparta 1 Liberec 0.

CZECH REP – TOP 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sparta	20	12	7	1	41	13	43
Teplice	20	10	6	4	37	23	36
Olomouc	20	9	7	4	28	23	34
Slavia	19	8	8	3	27	18	32
Drnovice	20	8	7	5	29	25	31
Chmel Blsany	20	9	2	9	32	30	29

DENMARK

Mar 7: AGF 1 AaB 0; Vejle 0 Brondby 0.
Mar 14: Aarhus Fremad 0 Silkeborg 1; B93 0 AaB 3; Vejle 1 Lyngby 2; Viborg 1 Herfolge 0; Brondby 3 FC Copenhagen 2.
Mar 15: AB 1 AGF 0.
Mar 17: Herfolge 0 B93 0.
Mar 19: FC Copenhagen 0 Vejle 1.
Mar 21: AGF 1 Aarhus Fremad 1; AaB 1 Viborg 1; Herfolge 0 AB 1; Lyngby 1 B93 0.

DENMARK – TOP 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AB	19	12	4	3	33	14	40
Brondby	18	10	2	6	40	20	32
AaB	18	8	8	2	39	22	32
FC Copenhagen	19	8	6	5	37	32	30
Lyngby	18	8	4	6	25	34	28
Vejle	19	8	3	8	30	28	27

ENGLAND

Saturday, February 27

Aston Villa 1 (Dublin pen 55)
Coventry 4 (Aloisi 25, 73, Boateng 51, 84)
Att: 38,799

Charlton 0 Nottm Forest 0 Att: 20,043

Chelsea 2 (Leboeuf pen 7, Goldbaek 38)
Liverpool 1 (Owen 77) Att: 34,822

Everton 1 (Jeffers 57)
Wimbledon 1 (Ekoku 14) Att: 32,574

Manchester Utd 2 (Keane 79, Yorke 83)
Southampton 1 (Le Tissier 90) Att: 55,316

Sheffield Wed 3 (Booth 11, 80, Sonner 77)
Middlesbrough 1 (Mustoe 78) Att: 24,534

Tottenham 1 (Sherwood 69)
Derby 1 (Burton 46) Att: 35,392

West Ham 2 (Pearce 28, Di Canio 31)
Blackburn 0 Att: 25,529

Sunday, February 28

Newcastle 1 (Hamann 77)
Arsenal 1 (Anelka 36) Att: 36,708

Monday, March 1

Leicester 1 (Cottee 76)
Leeds 2 (Kewell 24, Smith 60) Att: 18,101

Tuesday, March 2

Tottenham 3 (Armstrong 19, Iversen 68, Dominguez 90)
Southampton 0 Att: 28,580

Wednesday, March 3

Sheffield Wed 1 (Thome 60)
Wimbledon 2 (Ekoku 8, Gayle 31) Att: 24,116

Saturday, March 6

Coventry 2 (Whelan 67, Soltvedt 85)
Charlton 1 (Robinson 55) Att: 20,259

Southampton 1 (Kachloul 10)
West Ham 0 Att: 15,240

Wimbledon 0
Leicester 1 (Guppy 6) Att: 11,801

Tuesday, March 9

Arsenal 3 (Bergkamp 83, 88, Kanu 86)
Sheffield Wed 0 Att: 37,792

Wednesday, March 10

Blackburn 1 (Ward 2)
Everton 2 (Bakayoko 15, 65) Att: 27,219

Derby 2 (Baiano 17, Burton 21)
Aston Villa 1 (Thompson 44) Att: 26,836

Leeds 2 (Smith 42, Kewell 68)
Tottenham 0 Att: 34,521

Nottm Forest 1 (Freedman 45)
Newcastle 2 (Shearer pen 45, Hamann 73) Att: 22,852

Saturday, March 13

Chelsea 0
West Ham 1 (Kitson 75) Att: 34,765

Coventry 1 (Aloisi 22)
Blackburn 1 (Wilcox 67) Att: 19,701

Derby 3 (Burton 12, Wanchope 44, 49)
Liverpool 2 (Fowler pen 36, 57) Att: 32,913

Everton 0
Arsenal 2 (Parlour 16, Bergkamp pen 69) Att: 38,049

Leicester 1 (Lennon 60)
Charlton 1 (Mendonca 90) Att: 20,220

Newcastle 1 (Solano 16)
Man Utd 2 (Cole 25, 51) Att: 36,500

Sheffield Wed 0
Leeds 2 (Hasselbaink 4, Hopkin 73) Att: 28,142

Tottenham 1 (Sherwood 88)
Aston Villa 0 Att: 35,963

Wimbledon 1 (Gayle 79)
Nottm Forest 3 (Rogers 21, Freedman 59, Shipperley 84) Att: 12,149

Sunday, March 14

Middlesbrough 3 (Beck 44, Ricard 45, Vickers 62)
Southampton 0 Att: 33,387

Saturday, March 20

Arsenal 2 (Parlour 16, Overmars 80)
Coventry 0 Att: 38,073

Blackburn 3 (Ward 7, Jansen 18, 26)
Wimbledon 1 (Euell 65) Att: 21,754

Leeds 4 (Bowyer 18, Hasselbaink 32, Korsten 45, Harte 85)
Derby 1 (Baiano pen 4) Att: 38,971

Nottm Forest 1 (Freedman 37)
Middlesbrough 2 (Ricard 30, Deane 87) Att: 21,468

Southampton 1 (Le Tissier 41)
Sheffield Wed 0 Att: 15,201

West Ham 2 (Di Canio 17, Kitson 82)
Newcastle 0 Att: 25,997

Sunday, March 21

Aston Villa 0
Chelsea 3 (Flo 59, 90, Goldbaek 86) Att: 39,217

Man Utd 3 (Solskjaer 54, G Neville 63, Beckham 67)
Everton 1 (Hutchison 80) Att: 55,182

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	30	18	9	3	68	31	63
Arsenal	30	16	11	3	42	13	59
Chelsea	29	15	11	3	44	23	56
Leeds	30	15	9	6	49	27	54
West Ham	30	13	7	10	34	39	46
Aston Villa	30	12	8	10	39	37	44
Derby	30	11	11	8	32	32	44
Wimbledon	30	10	10	10	34	44	40
Liverpool	28	11	6	11	52	37	39
Tottenham	29	9	12	8	34	34	39
Middlesbrough	29	9	12	8	39	40	39
Newcastle	30	10	8	12	38	41	38
Sheff Wed	30	10	5	15	35	33	35
Leicester	28	8	10	10	28	37	34
Coventry	30	8	7	15	31	42	31
Everton	30	7	10	13	23	35	31
Blackburn	30	7	9	14	32	42	30
Southampton	30	8	5	17	28	56	29
Charlton	29	6	10	13	33	40	28
Nottm Forest	30	4	8	18	27	59	20

FA CUP – 5TH RND REPLAYS

Feb 23: Arsenal 2 Sheff Utd 1.
Feb 24: Blackburn 0 Newcastle 1; Derby 3 Huddersfield 1; Tottenham 2 Leeds 0.

QUARTER-FINALS

Mar 6: Arsenal 1 Derby 0.
Mar 7: Man Utd 0 Chelsea 0; Newcastle 4 Everton 1.
Mar 16: Barnsley 0 Tottenham 1.

QUARTER-FINAL REPLAY

Mar 10: Chelsea 0 Man Utd 2.

LEAGUE CUP – FINAL

Mar 21 – Wembley
Tottenham 1 (Nielsen 90)
Leicester 0 Att: 77,892

FRANCE

Thursday, February 25

Marseille 1 (Pires 47)
Strasbourg 0 Att: 45,000

Montpellier 2 (Robert pen 78, 83)
Monaco 3 (Giuly 33, Trezeguet 39, Eloi 51)
Att: 18,000

Nantes 0 Bordeaux 0 Att: 35,000

Paris SG 0
Lyon 1 (Caveglia pen 79) Att: 34,000

Friday, February 26

Auxerre 1 (Klos 53)
Lens 2 (Nouma 9, Brunel 37) Att: 8,000

Bastia 1 (Prince 59)
Toulouse 1 (Oceano 66) Att: 2,000

Le Havre 0
Lorient 1 (Loko 54) Att: 8,000

Metz 1 (Schemmel 42)
Sochaux 1 (B Bouger 40) Att: 15,000

Rennes 2 (Le Roux 51, Gousse 77)
Nancy 1 (Cascarino 90) Att: 14,000

Tuesday, March 9

Nancy 2 (Meniri 67, Cascarino 70)
Bordeaux 3 (Wiltord 17, 62, Alicarte 32) Att: 10,236

Sochaux 0 Marseille 0 Att: 8,980

Wednesday, March 10

Lens 1 (Nyarko 20)
Montpellier 0 Att: 32,000

Lorient 1 (Sommeil og 56)
Rennes 1 (Nonda 70) Att: 13,000

Lyon 2 (Caveglia pen 80, Carteron 82)
Auxerre 1 (Carnot pen 87) Att: 22,649

Monaco 0 Metz 0 Att: 4,000

Paris SG 0 Nantes 0 Att: 40,640

Strasbourg 1 (Zavagno 68)
Bastia 1 (Clayton 79) Att: 12,489

Toulouse 0 Le Havre 0 Att: 20,385

Sunday, March 14

Sochaux 1 (Flachez 85)
Monaco 1 (Trezeguet 15) Att: 12,000

Strasbourg 2 (Bertin pen 9, Rouxel 26)
Auxerre 1 (Diomede 19) Att: 13,000

Friday, March 19

Bastia 1 (Krupnikovic 57)
Nancy 2 (Correa 40, Bastien pen 70) Att: 3,500

Nantes 0
Monaco 1 (Lamouchi 60) Att: 34,000

Saturday, March 20

Auxerre 0
Paris SG 1 (Rodriguez 42) Att: 10,000

Bordeaux 1 (Pavon 13)
Strasbourg 0 Att: 25,000

Le Havre 1 (Pouget 38)
Lyon 0 Att: 10,000

Marseille 4 (Ravanelli 17, 72, Maurice 50, Gourvennec pen 77)
Lorient 1 (Camadini 88) Att: 45,000

Metz 0 Lens 1 (Brunel 46) Att: 20,000

Montpellier 0 Sochaux 0 Att: 11,000

Rennes 1 (Gousse 90)
Toulouse 0 Att: 15,000

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bordeaux	27	18	5	4	55	22	59
Marseille	27	17	7	3	47	21	58
Lyon	26	13	8	5	36	23	47
Monaco	27	13	7	7	41	27	46
Rennes	27	12	8	7	34	32	44
Lens	27	12	5	10	35	33	41
Nantes	27	10	10	7	33	26	40
Montpellier	27	9	7	11	43	41	34
PSG	27	8	8	11	24	25	32
Bastia	27	9	5	13	31	35	32
Auxerre	27	8	7	12	34	35	31
Metz	26	7	9	10	23	31	30
Strasbourg	27	6	11	10	21	28	29
Nancy	26	7	6	13	26	36	27
Le Havre	26	6	8	12	18	30	26
Toulouse	27	5	11	11	19	36	26
Lorient	27	5	10	12	22	42	25
Sochaux	25	3	12	10	20	39	21

FRENCH CUP – 3RD RND

Mar 13: Amiens 1 Sedan 2; Angouleme 1 Troyes 0; Clermont 0 Le Mans 2; Guingamp 1 Lille 0; Lens 1 Laval 1 (aet) *Laval won on pens*; Montagnarde 0 Rouen 2 (aet).
Mar 14: Metz 1 Nantes 3; St Georges-les-A 0 Nimes 2.

LEAGUE CUP – QUARTER-FINALS

Mar 5: Auxerre 0 Sochaux 1.
Mar 6: Paris SG 0 Montpellier 2.
Mar 7: Rennes 0 Lens 1; Metz 3 Toulouse 3 (aet) *Metz won on penalties.*

GERMANY

Friday, February 26

Kaiserslautern 1 (Ramzy 66)
Stuttgart 1 (Bobic 60) Att: 41,000

Werder Bremen 1 (Ailton 84)
Bochum 1 (Kuntz 20) Att: 26,750

Saturday, February 27

Dortmund 3 (Moller 11, Chapuisat 54, But 62)
Nurnberg 0 Att: 60,000

Frankfurt 0 Borussia MG 0 Att: 28,000

Freiburg 0 Wolfsburg 0 Att: 22,500

Hamburg 0 Bayer Leverkusen 0 Att: 24,000

Hansa Rostock 0 Bayern Munich 4 (Elber 69, 87, Jancker 80, Matthaus 89) Att: 25,000

Munich 1860 0 Duisburg 0 Att: 30,000

Sunday, February 28

Schalke 0 Hertha 0 Att: 41,100

Friday, March 5

Duisburg 4 (Beierle 31, 34, 44, Bugera 65)
Hansa Rostock 1 (Breitkreutz 87) Att: 11,225

Nurnberg 3 (Kuka 36, 60, Ciric 45)
Schalke 0 Att: 40,100

Saturday, March 6

Bayern Munich 2 (Schwinkendorf og 30, Daei 79)
Freiburg 0 Att: 52,000

Bochum 0 Dortmund 1 (Ricken 29) Att: 30,195

Borussia MG 2 (Klinkert 43, Deisler 75)
Munich 1860 0 Att: 25,200

Hertha 1 (Preetz 79)
Kaiserslautern 1 (Ballack 3) Att: 54,433

Stuttgart 2 (Balakov 40, Carnell 90)
Frankfurt 0 Att: 25,000

Wolfsburg 4 (Thomsen 17, Reyna 53, 75, C Akonnor 89)
Hamburg 1 (Ballwanz og 10) Att: 17,734

Sunday, March 7

Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Kirsten 75, Beinlich 90)
Werder Bremen 0 Att: 22,500

Friday, March 12

Dortmund 1 (Herrlich 13)
Leverkusen 0 Att: 65,000

Freiburg 3 (Kobiaschwili 60, Baya 80, Weisshaupt 81)
Hansa Rostock 0 Att: 22,500

Saturday, March 13

Borussia MG 0
Duisburg 2 (Spies 58, Tofting 77) Att: 34,500

Hamburg 0
Bayern Munich 2 (Butt og 12, Salihamidzic 41) Att: 28,600

Kaiserslautern 2 (Rosler 39, Ratinho 61)
Nurnberg 0 Att: 41,500

Munich 1860 1 (Zelic 90)
Stuttgart 1 (Balakov 81) Att: 30,000

Schalke 2 (Mulder pen 19, Buskens 28)
Bochum 2 (Reis pen 20, Basturk 24) Att: 47,700

Werder Bremen 0
Wolfsburg 1 (Nowak 83) Att: 28,000

Sunday, March 14

Frankfurt 1 (Yang 73)
Hertha 1 (Sverrisson 59) Att: 26,000

Tuesday, March 16

Bochum 2 (Fischer og 21, Mahdavikia 81)
Hamburg 0 Att: 24,603

Friday, March 19

Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Beinlich 36)
Schalke 1 (Mulder 56) Att: 22,500

Wolfsburg 0 Dortmund 0 Att: 21,600

Saturday, March 20

Bayern Munich 1 (Jancker 87)
Werder Bremen 0 Att: 46,000

Bochum 1 (Zeyer 42)
Kaiserslautern 2 (Ratinho 59, Rosler 86) Att: 23,670

Duisburg 1 (Beierle 56)
Freiburg 0 Att: 13,060

Hertha 2 (Preetz pen 9, Tretschok 79)
Munich 1860 1 (Winkler 23) Att: 48,364

Nurnberg 2 (Kuka 20, Ciric 79)
Frankfurt 2 (Yang 9, 62) Att: 34,500

Stuttgart 2 (Lisztes 19, Balakov 60)
Borussia MG 2 (Frontzeck 87, Ketelaer 90) Att: 28,500

Sunday, March 21

Hansa Rostock 0
Hamburg 1 (Gravesen 5) Att: 16,000

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern Munich	23	19	2	2	55	13	59
Kaiserslautern	23	13	6	4	37	31	45
Bayer Leverkusen	23	11	9	3	44	21	42
Dortmund	23	11	6	6	33	21	39
Hertha	23	11	5	7	33	22	38
Munich 1860	23	10	7	6	38	30	37
Wolfsburg	23	9	9	5	40	30	36
Stuttgart	23	7	9	7	31	30	30
Duisburg	23	7	8	8	27	33	29
Hamburg	23	7	7	9	25	31	28
Freiburg	23	6	9	8	25	27	27
Werder Bremen	23	6	7	10	29	31	25
Bochum	23	6	6	11	28	39	24
Schalke	23	5	9	9	24	37	24
Frankfurt	23	4	8	11	25	38	20
Nurnberg	23	3	11	9	26	41	20
Hansa Rostock	23	3	8	12	28	47	17
Borussia MG	23	3	6	14	24	50	15

GERMAN CUP – SEMI-FINALS

Mar 9: Rot-Weiss Oberhausen 1 Bayern Munich 3.
Mar 10: Wolfsburg 0 Werder Bremen 1.

GREECE

Feb 27: OFI 1 Olympiakos 2.
Feb 28: Panionios 3 Aris 2; Eleysina 1 Apollon 0; Kavala 1 Ionikos 3; Panathinaikos 0 PAOK 1; Ethnikos P 1 Ethnikos A 2; Paniliakos 1 Xanthi 0; Iraklis 0 Proodeftiki 1.
Mar 6: Apollon 2 Veroia 0.
Mar 7: Aris 3 Kavala 1; Ionikos 4 Panathinaikos 4; AEK 2 OFI 0; PAOK 0 Ethnikos P 0; Ethnikos A 1 Iraklis 0; Xanthi 4 Proodeftiki 1.
Mar 8: Eleysina 1 Panionios 0; Olympiakos 3 Paniliakos 0.
Mar 13: Proodeftiki 0 Olympiakos 1.
Mar 14: Panionios 1 Kavala 2; Veroia 0 Eleysina 1; Panathinaikos 3 Aris 1; OFI 0 Apollon 1; Ethnikos P 1 Ionikos 2; Iraklis 1 PAOK 0; Xanthi 0 Ethnikos A 1.
Mar 15: Paniliakos 0 AEK 1.
Mar 20: Kavala 2 Panathinaikos 1.
Mar 21: Eleysina 1 OFI 2; Aris 4 Ethnikos P 0; Apollon 5 Paniliakos 0; Ionikos 0 Iraklis 2; AEK 1 Proodeftiki 0; PAOK 0 Xanthi 0.

GREECE – TOP 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos	23	18	2	3	58	15	56
AEK	24	17	4	3	54	18	55
Panathinaikos	24	16	2	6	45	28	50
PAOK	24	13	5	6	29	20	44
Aris	24	13	3	8	36	32	42
Ionikos	24	11	6	7	44	27	39

HOLLAND

Wednesday, February 24

Feyenoord 1 (Korneev 75)
Waalwijk 0 Att: 25,097

NAC 0 De Graafschap 1 (Godee 71) Att: 12,731

Friday, February 26

Cambuur 2 (Van der Heide 35, Van Rijswijk 42)
Vitesse 2 (Reuser 31, Curovic 73) Att: 7,500

Saturday, February 27

NEC 1 (Renfurm 90)
MVV 1 (Vriesde 2) Att: 4,500

PSV 2 (Van Nistelrooy pen 28, Van der Weerden pen 62)
NAC 0 Att: 26,400

Roda JC 8 (Peeters 6, 26, Tchoutang 7, Nygaard 23, 54, Van Houdt 29, Van der Luer 35, Vrede pen 66)
AZ 2 (Boussatta 77, Wijker 80) Att: 7,750

William II 1 (Bombarda 68)
Utrecht 0 Att: 11,200

Sunday, February 28

Ajax 5 (Arveladze 28, 30, Gorre 70, Hoekstra 81, Gronkjaer 86)
Sparta 1 (Nieuwenburg 13) Att: 41,000

Feyenoord 2 (Tomasson 48, 90)
Heerenveen 1 (Samardzic 82) Att: 35,460

Friday, March 5

Roda JC 1 (Peeters 85)
PSV 3 (Nilis 29, 69, Bruggink 78) Att: 8,500

Saturday, March 6

AZ 3 (Huiberts 13, 75, Mutsaers 84)
Cambuur 1 (Durmusoglu 12) Att: 7,645

MVV 2 (Vriesde 51, Kortchaguine 53)
Twente 5 (De Witte 60, Vennegoor of Hesselink 62, 70, 90, Van de Par 81) Att: 6,000

NAC 2 (Stewart 43, 53)
Heerenveen 2 (G de Nooijer 41, Denneboom 80) Att: 11,348

Vitesse 1 (Curovic 68)
Fortuna 2 (Hamming 24, Simons 90) Att: 22,500

Sunday, March 7

Ajax 5 (Nwakire og 3, McCarthy 23, 58, 70, Gronkjaer 50)
Utrecht 2 (Mols 56, 65) Att: 40,121

De Graafschap 3 (Roelofsen 6, Redeker 11, Rzasa 51)
Feyenoord 4 (Van Gastel pen 15, 55, Korneev 83, Cairo 84) Att: 8,000

Sparta 1 (El Khattabi 48)
NEC 0 Att: 4,500

Waalwijk 1 (Hoogendorp pen 90)
Willem II 3 (Bombarda 31, Victoria 51, Ramzi 83) Att: 6,150

Saturday, March 13

Heerenveen 2 (G de Nooijer 18, 34)
Waalwijk 0 Att: 13,700

PSV 3 (Nilis 3, 66, Van Nistelrooy 71)
Cambuur 0 Att: 26,500

Willem II 2 (Ramzi 4, Schulp 87)
De Graafschap 0 Att: 11,700

Sunday, March 14

Sparta 1 (Krijgsman 90)
Vitesse 3 (Curovic 14, Jochemsen 25, Machlas 38) Att: 5,000

Twente 0 Roda JC 0 Att: 12,500

Utrecht 2 (Mols 45, Van Eijkeren 85)
AZ 2 (Buskermolen pen 10, Van Galen 78) Att: 13,500

Tuesday, March 16

MVV 1 (Perez 77)
Ajax 4 (Gronkjaer 13, 26, 83, Litmanen 43) Att: 10,000

Wednesday, March 17

Cambuur 1 (Van Utrecht 11)
Feyenoord 5 (Kalou 18, Tomasson 30, Cruz 32, 45, Van Gobbel 35) Att: 10,000

Fortuna 3 (Kool 7, Jeffrey 9, Hamming 27)
Utrecht 2 (Robbemond pen 17, Mols 50) Att: 6,000

NAC 0
Waalwijk 2 (Hoogendorp 23, Echteld 66) Att: 10,873

Thursday, March 18

Roda JC 0
Willem II 2 (Arts 37, Bombarda 60) Att: 6,500

Friday, March 19

Twente 2 (Vennegoor of Hesselink 2, Bosman 56)
NEC 0 Att: 12,500

Saturday, March 20

AZ 0
Fortuna 3 (Hamming 33, 38, 89) Att: 7,756

Cambuur 1 (Van der Heide 57)
MVV 0 Att: 7,800

Heerenveen 4 (Pahlplatz 12, Samardzic 31, Denneboom 63, G de Nooijer 85)
De Graafschap 1 (Emam 86) Att: 13,700

Sunday, March 21

Ajax 0
Vitesse 1 (Mahlas 2) Att: 49,876

Sparta 0
PSV 5 (Bruggink 26, Van Nistelrooy 52, Van der Doelen 82, Kolkka 89, Khokhlov 90) Att: 4,500

Utrecht 2 (Zwaanswijk 69, Kuyt 75)
NAC 0 Att: 12,800

Willem II 4 (Arts pen 11, Hyypia 21, Ceesay 45, Abdellaoui 67)
Feyenoord 1 (Van Gastel pen 90) Att: 14,600

Tuesday, March 23

Roda JC 2 (Van der Luer 21, Van Houdt 63)
Heerenveen 1 (Talan 52) Att: 6,500

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Feyenoord	24	18	4	2	58	25	58
Vitesse	25	15	5	5	48	30	50
PSV	25	13	7	5	62	38	46
Willem II	26	14	4	8	49	39	46
Ajax	25	12	8	5	53	25	44
Roda JC	25	13	5	7	47	32	44
Twente	26	12	7	7	40	33	43
Heerenveen	26	11	9	6	44	33	42
AZ	25	9	11	5	40	41	38
Utrecht	26	9	6	11	46	48	33
Fortuna	25	9	6	10	34	38	33
NEC	25	7	8	10	32	40	29
Cambuur	25	6	7	12	27	49	25
MVV	25	5	7	13	30	47	22
De Graafschap	25	4	10	11	25	43	22
Sparta	25	5	3	17	25	54	18
Waalwijk	26	3	6	17	27	51	15
NAC	25	3	5	17	25	46	14

DUTCH CUP – QUARTER-FINALS

Mar 9: Fortuna 3 Emmen 1; Eindhoven 0 PSV 5.
Mar 10: Feyenoord 2 Vitesse 1.
Mar 24: Zwolle 1 Ajax 2.

HUNGARY

Feb 27: Siofok 0 Ujpest 2; Gazszer 0 Gyor 2; MTK 2 Zalaegerszeg 1; Vasas 1 Nyiregyhaza 1.
Mar 1: Kispest Honved 0 Videoton 0.
Mar 6: Dunaferr 2 Vasas 1; Nyiregyhaza 3 Kispest Honved 0; Ferencvaros 7 Kerulet 1; Vac 1 MTK 2; Zalaegerszeg 2 Gazszer 0; Gyor 1 Siofok 1; Ujpest 3 BVSC 1; Debrecen 5 Diosgyor 0.
Mar 7: Videoton 0 Haladas 0.
Mar 13: Debrecen 0 Ujpest 2; BVSC 2 Gyor 1; Siofok 0 Zalaegerszeg 2; Gazszer 1 Vac 0; MTK 2 Ferencvaros 0; Haladas 3 Nyiregyhaza 2.
Mar 14: Vasas 0 Diosgyor 0.
Mar 20: Dunaferr 2 Haladas 0; Nyiregyhaza 3 Kerulet 3; Videoton 0 MTK 1; Ferencvaros 2 Gazszer 0; Vac 0 Siofok 2; Zalaegerszeg 3 BVSC 0; Gyor 3 Debrecen 1; Diosgyor 1 Ujpest 1.
Mar 21: Vasas 2 Kispest Honved 1.

HUNGARY – TOP 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
MTK	21	17	2	2	48	15	53
Gyor	21	12	6	3	39	23	42
Zalaegerszeg	21	12	5	4	32	19	41
Dunaferr	21	12	4	5	39	24	40
Ujpest	21	12	3	6	38	28	39
Diosgyor	21	10	7	4	44	33	37

ITALY

Saturday, February 27

Inter 0 Juventus 0 Att: 80,373

Parma 3 (Chiesa pen 31, 43, Crespo 81)
Perugia 1 (Bucchi 60) Att: 19,769

Piacenza 5 (Inzaghi pen 20, pen 38, 86, Rastelli 43, Piovani pen 84)
Bologna 0 Att: 9,574

Roma 1 (Sergio 64) **Milan 0** Att: 63,944

Sunday, February 28

Bari 1 (Andersson 84)
Cagliari 1 (Neqrouz og 81) Att: 14,009

Empoli 0 Sampdoria 1 (Pecchia 32) Att: 16,330

Salernitana 1 (Di Vaio 75)
Fiorentina 1 (Torricelli 86) Att: 32,119

Venezia 1 (Recoba pen 83)
Udinese 0 Att: 12,191

Vicenza 1 (Cardone 68)
Lazio 2 (Conceicao 48, Mihajlovic 90) Att: 18,420

Sunday, March 7

Bari 1 (Osmanovski 43) **Inter 0** Att: 37,651

Bologna 2 (Andersson 72, Signori 85)
Venezia 1 (Maniero pen 23) Att: 26,487

Cagliari 1 (De Patre 24)
Vicenza 0 Att: 19,708

Fiorentina 2 (Oliveira 43, Rui Costa pen 55)
Parma 1 (Stanic 64) Att: 33,967

Lazio 6 (Negro 43, Vieri 50, Salas 59, 68, Baronio 82, Nesta 90)
Salernitana 1 (Vannucchi 30) Att: 52,625

Milan 1 (Bierhoff 43)
Piacenza 0 Att: 46,629

Perugia 3 (Tedesco 45, Petrachi 55, Bucchi 76)
Empoli 1 (Zalayeta 7) Att: 12,712

Sampdoria 1 (Ortega 64)
Juventus 2 (Amoruso 74, Inzaghi 90) Att: 27,644

Udinese 2 (Jorgensen 84, Amoroso pen 87)
Roma 1 (Fabio Junior 28) Att: 19,936

Saturday, March 13

Inter 2 (N'Gotty og 7, Zanetti 77)
Milan 2 (Leonardo 14, 52) Att: 79,540

Juventus 2 (Fonseca 30, Inzaghi 77)
Udinese 1 (Sosa 48) Att: 47,981

Parma 2 (Veron 57, Crespo 77)
Bari 1 (Masinga 3) Att: 19,131

Roma 3 (Delvecchio 10, 39, Gautieri 61)
Bologna 1 (Andersson 68) Att: 42,686

Sunday, March 14

Empoli 0 Lazio 0 Att: 17,000

Piacenza 2 (Inzaghi pen 9, Vierchowod 81)
Cagliari 0 Att: 9,793

Salernitana 2 (Kolousek 61, Fresi 84)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 31,829

Venezia 4 (Recoba 18, 45, 90, Miceli 42)
Fiorentina 1 (Esposito pen 88) Att: 12,630

Vicenza 3 (Zauli 8, Schenardi 36, Otero pen 42)
Perugia 0 Att: 15,604

Sunday, March 21

Bologna 4 (Nervo 3, Simutenkov 79, Andersson 83, Ingesson pen 90)
Vicenza 2 (Otero 41, 85) Att: 26,795

Cagliari 5 (Mboma 22, 46, 60, Muzzi 27, 80)
Empoli 1 (Di Napoli 64) Att: 18,762

Fiorentina 2 (Batistuta 6, Esposito 90)
Piacenza 1 (Inzaghi pen 72) Att: 33,467

Juventus 1 (Iuliano 72)
Roma 1 (Delvecchio 52) Att: 47,405

Lazio 2 (Conceicao 8, Mihajlovic 14)
Venezia 0 Att: 53,253

Milan 2 (Bierhoff 42, Ganz pen 90)
Bari 2 (Osmanovski 6, 79) Att: 50,553

Perugia 1 (Rapajic 69)
Salernitana 0 Att: 15,169

Sampdoria 4 (Montella 11, pen 51, 65, Ortega 68)
Inter 0 Att: 24,777

Udinese 2 (Sosa 23, Amoroso 89)
Parma 1 (Vanoli 69) Att: 20,000

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lazio	26	16	7	3	54	23	55
Fiorentina	26	15	5	6	43	26	50
Milan	26	13	9	4	39	29	48
Parma	26	13	8	5	47	27	47
Udinese	26	12	6	8	36	33	42
Juventus	26	11	8	7	31	26	41
Roma	26	10	9	7	48	35	39
Bologna	26	10	8	8	35	31	38
Inter	26	10	6	10	45	37	36
Cagliari	26	9	5	12	37	38	32
Bari	26	6	13	7	30	35	31
Venezia	26	8	7	11	27	35	31
Perugia	26	9	4	13	34	46	31
Sampdoria	26	6	8	12	27	44	26
Piacenza	26	6	7	13	35	40	25
Vicenza	26	5	8	13	17	34	23
Salernitana	26	6	5	15	26	46	23
Empoli	26	3	9	14	21	47	16

ITALIAN CUP – SEMI-FINALS

Mar 10: Parma 2 Inter 1
Parma won 4-1 on agg.
Mar 11: Fiorentina 2 Bologna 2 (aet)
Fiorentina won 4-2 on agg.

POLAND

Feb 26: Lech 2 Amica 0.
Feb 27: Widzew 2 R Radzionkow 1; Stomil 2 Katowice 1; Polonia 4 Belchatow 0; Odra 0 Wisla 2; Pogon 1 R Chorzow 0; Gornik 0 LKS 0.
Feb 28: Zaglebie 0 Legia 0.
Mar 6: Gornik 0 Widzew 1; LKS 1 Pogon 1; R Chorzow 0 Odra 2; Wisla 1 Polonia 3; Belchatow 0 Zaglebie 1; Legia 1 Stomil 0; Amica 1 R Radzionkow 0.
Mar 7: Katowice 1 Lech 2.
Mar 13: R Radzionkow 1 Katowice 1; Lech 0 Legia 0; Polonia 3 R Chorzow 0; Odra 2 LKS 1; Pogon 0 Gornik 1.
Mar 14: Widzew 3 Amica 0; Stomil 0 Belchatow 2; Zaglebie 0 Wisla 3.
Mar 20: Pogon 1 Widzew 2; Gornik 0 Odra 1; LKS 0 Polonia 0; R Chorzow 0 Zaglebie 0; Wisla 3 Stomil 0; Belchatow 1 Lech 3; Legia 1 R Radzionkow 1; Katowice 0 Amica 0.

POLAND – TOP 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wisla	19	16	1	2	45	14	49
Lech	19	13	1	5	40	18	40
Widzew	19	12	1	6	35	22	37
Legia	19	9	7	3	23	15	34
Polonia	19	8	6	5	30	22	30
Gornik	19	8	6	5	24	18	30

PORTUGAL

Friday, February 26

Uniao Leiria 0 Sporting Braga 0

Saturday, February 27

Beira Mar 2 (Fary 16, Sousa 59)
Sporting Lisbon 2 (Marcos 7, Edmilson 29)

Rio Ave 1 (Nito 37)
Estrela Amadora 1 (Leal 40)

Sunday, February 28

Alverca 0 Benfica 2 (Saunders 45, Paulo Madeira 75)

Boavista 0 FC Porto 0

Farense 2 (Carlos Costa 27, 38)
Academica 0

Maritimo 2 (Alex 55, Herivelto 57)
Chaves 2 (Andre 26, Seba 53)

Salgueiros 1 (Rene Rivas og 85)
Campomaiorense 1 (Laelson 59)

Monday, March 1

Guimaraes 2 (Edmilson 30, 66)
Vitoria Setubal 0

Friday, March 12

Sporting Lisbon 1 (Edmilson 56) **Farense 0**

Saturday, March 13

Chaves 2 (Timnev 38, Seba 47)
Guimaraes 3 (Soderstrom 53, 73, Edmilson 78)

FC Porto 3 (Aloisio 16, Jardel 58, Peixe 82)
Uniao Leiria 1 (Jorge Costa og 74)

Sunday, March 14

Academica 1 (Dario 30)
Maritimo 3 (Herivelto 9, Romeu 27, Bunbury 88)

Benfica 0 Boavista 3 (Ayew 5, 65, Luis Manuel 90)

Campomaiorense 0 Rio Ave 0

Estrela Amadora 1 (Capitao 90)
Beira Mar 2 (Fary 19, Cristiano 30)

Sporting Braga 1 (Luis Carlos 70)
Salgueiros 1 (Joao Pedro 66)

Vitoria Setubal 4 (Kasumov 64, Tonito 72, Maki 84, Chiquinho 90)
Alverca 0

Friday, March 19

Boavista 1 (Ayew 15)
Vitoria Setubal 1 (Kasumov 45)

Saturday, March 20

Maritimo 1 (Albertino 90)
Sporting Lisbon 3 (Edmilson 50, 68, Quim Berto 82)

Salgueiros 1 (Filipe Candido 81)
FC Porto 3 (Zahovic 3, Jardel 36, 79)

Sunday, March 21

Alverca 3 (Caju 7, 18, Ramirez 87)
Chaves 1 (Wanderley 24)

Beira Mar 1 (Gila 47)
Rio Ave 2 (Alercio 14, Duda 73)

Farense 1 (King pen 32)
Estrela Amadora 1 (Capitao 26)

Guimaraes 1 (Gilmar 40)
Academica 1 (Lim 20)

Sporting Braga 0
Campomaiorense 2 (Nuno Campos 21, Mauro Soares 67)

Uniao Leiria 1 (Sergio Nunes 89)
Benfica 1 (Joao Pinto 46)

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Porto	26	18	5	3	61	23	59
Boavista	26	16	8	2	43	20	56
Benfica	26	16	5	5	53	20	53
Sporting Lisbon	26	14	9	3	48	21	51
Uniao Leiria	26	10	8	8	26	21	38
Estrela Amadora	26	9	9	8	28	31	36
Vitoria Setubal	26	9	8	9	27	30	35
Guimaraes	26	9	7	10	40	34	34
Salgueiros	26	6	13	7	35	38	31
Maritimo	26	7	8	11	32	35	29
Sporting Braga	26	6	10	10	30	44	28
Rio Ave	26	6	10	10	21	35	28
Farense	26	7	7	12	24	40	28
Campomaiorense	26	7	6	13	29	39	27
Beira Mar	26	5	12	9	25	35	27
Alverca	26	5	10	11	21	37	25
Chaves	26	5	8	13	33	50	23
Academica	26	4	7	15	26	49	19

ROMANIA

Mar 6: Ceahlaul 1 National 0; Resita 3 U Cluj 0; Farul 2 Onesti 0; Bacau 2 Astra 0; Gloria 2 Dinamo 3; Otelul 1 Foresta 0; Petrolul 0 Olimpia 0; Steaua 2 U Craiova 0.
Mar 7: Rapid 2 Arges 0.
Mar 13: U Craiova 0 Bacau 1; Dinamo 2 Farul 1; Arges 1 Resita 0; Onesti 1 Rapid 2; Foresta 0 Gloria 0; Olimpia 0 Ceahlaul 1; Astra 1 Petrolul 1; U Cluj 0 Steaua 2.
Mar 14: National 0 Otelul 1.
Mar 21: Astra 3 Otelul 1; U Craiova 2 Ceahlaul 1; Onesti 2 Steaua 3; Foresta 2 Farul 0; Olimpia 1 Gloria 0; Rapid 2 Resita 1; U Cluj 1 Petrolul 2.
Mar 22: National 1 Dinamo 2; Arges 0 Bacau 3.

ROMANIA – TOP 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rapid	21	17	3	1	46	12	54
Dinamo	21	17	2	2	68	20	53
Steaua	21	13	4	4	39	19	43
Bacau	21	11	8	2	29	17	41
Arges	21	12	2	7	37	25	38
Otelul	21	12	1	8	31	22	37

SCOTLAND

Saturday, February 27

Celtic 2 (Burley 74, Larsson 78)
Dundee Utd 1 (Dodds 25) Att: 59,902

Dundee 0
St Johnstone 1 (Grant 7) Att: 7,245

Hearts 0
Aberdeen 2 (Bernard 53, Wyness 71) Att: 13,957

Motherwell 1 (McCulloch 46)
Dunfermline 1 (Britton 86) Att: 6,094

Sunday, February 28

Kilmarnock 0
Rangers 5 (McCann 5, Wallace 75, 87, 90, Johansson 85) Att: 16,242

Saturday, March 6

Kilmarnock 0 Dunfermline 0 Att: 8,032

Saturday, March 13

Dunfermline 2 (Thomson 63, Graham 89)
Dundee 0 Att: 6,890

Rangers 2 (Wallace 31, Johansson 59)
Motherwell 1 (Gower 68) Att: 49,483

St Johnstone 0
Kilmarnock 1 (Holt 18) Att: 5,461

Sunday, March 14

Aberdeen 1 (Winters 79)
Celtic 5 (Viduka 26, 47, Larsson 69, 72, Burley 89) Att: 16,825

Saturday, March 20

Dundee 2 (Annand 54, 65)
Hearts 0 Att: 6,612

Dunfermline 1 (Petrie 61)
St Johnstone 0 Att: 5,504

Motherwell 1 (Teale pen 90)
Aberdeen 1 (Winters 59) Att: 6,963

Rangers 0 Dundee Utd 1 (Olofsson 44) Att: 49,164

Sunday, March 21

Kilmarnock 0 Celtic 0 Att: 14,472

SCOTLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	28	19	5	4	63	24	62
Celtic	28	15	8	5	67	25	53
Kilmarnock	28	12	10	6	32	20	46
St Johnstone	28	11	9	8	32	35	42
Motherwell	28	7	10	11	27	41	31
Aberdeen	28	8	7	13	31	49	31
Dundee	28	8	6	14	24	44	30
Dundee Utd	27	7	8	12	27	31	29
Dunfermline	28	4	15	9	22	38	27
Hearts	27	6	6	15	22	40	24

SCOTTISH CUP – 4TH RND

Mar 1: Clydebank 2 Dundee Utd 2.

4TH RND REPLAY

Mar 6: Dundee Utd 3 Clydebank 0.

QUARTER-FINALS

Mar 6: Motherwell 0 St Johnstone 2.
Mar 7: Rangers 2 Falkirk 1.
Mar 8: Greenock Morton 0 Celtic 3.
Mar 13: Ayr 0 Dundee Utd 0.

QUARTER-FINAL REPLAY

Mar 16: Dundee Utd 2 Ayr 1.

SPAIN

Saturday, February 27

Athletic Bilbao 0 Celta Vigo 0 Att: 38,000

Atletico Madrid 0 Oviedo 0 Att: 25,000

Barcelona 2 (Kluivert 30, 79)
Valencia 4 (A Ilie 5, Claudio Lopez 39, 88, Angulo 82) Att: 80,000

Betis Sevilla 3 (Fernando 13, Canas 68, Ito 90)
Real Madrid 2 (Raul 29, Morientes 75) Att: 40,000

Sunday, February 28

La Coruna 0
Real Sociedad 1 (Idiakez 90) Att: 18,000

Mallorca 1 (Dani 12)
Tenerife 1 (Alexis 43) Att: 13,800

Racing Santander 2 (Munitis 40, Victor pen 80)
Alaves 0 Att: 15,000

Valladolid 4 (Peternac pen 38, Turiel 52, Alberto 81, 87)
Salamanca 1 (Giovanella 49) Att: 19,000

Villarreal 2 (Alfaro 39, Alberto 77)
Espanyol 2 (De Lucas 79, Helguera 89) Att: 15,000

Zaragoza 3 (Milosevic 33, Garitano 56, Marcos Vales 77)
Extremadura 1 (Velamazan pen 60) Att: 20,000

Saturday, March 6

Oviedo 1 (Dely Valdes 46)
La Coruna 2 (Djalminha 22, Fran 84) Att: 11,000

Sunday, March 7

Alaves 2 (Julio Salinas 68, 79)
Mallorca 0 Att: 17,000

Celta Vigo 4 (Gudelj 1, 80, Tomas 6, Revivo 70)
Betis Sevilla 0 Att: 20,000

Espanyol 0
Valladolid 2 (Peternac pen 34, Victor pen 90) Att: 18,600

Extremadura 0
Racing Santander 3 (Munitis 2, Bestchastnykh 52, Victor 73) Att: 9,700

Real Madrid 3 (Raul pen 21, 90, Morientes 49)
Zaragoza 2 (Kili Gonzalez 74, 75) Att: 60,000

Real Sociedad 1 (De Paula 13)
Villarreal 1 (Craioveanu 88) Att: 25,111

Salamanca 1 (Cardetti 71)
Barcelona 4 (Figo 9, Luis Enrique 44, Nuno Luis og 45, Anderson 80) Att: 15,170

Tenerife 1 (Makaay 21)
Atletico Madrid 0 Att: 18,000

Valencia 4 (Ilie 53, pen 73, Angloma 67, Claudio Lopez 85)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Urzaiz 36) Att: 50,000

Saturday, March 13

Atletico Madrid 1 (Jose Mari 19)
Mallorca 2 (Chamot og 8, Paunovic 30) Att: 35,000

Betis Sevilla 0
Valencia 1 (Mendieta 43) Att: 35,000

Racing Santander 1 (Ismael 30)
Real Madrid 3 (Raul 51, Roberto Carlos 73, Suker 83) Att: 20,000

Zaragoza 0 Celta Vigo 1 (Revivo 20) Att: 22,000

Sunday, March 14

Athletic Bilbao 1 (Rios 83)
Salamanca 0 Att: 35,000

Barcelona 3 (Rivaldo 16, pen 30, Kluivert 52)
Espanyol 0 Att: 70,000

Extremadura 1 (Dure 69)
Alaves 0 Att: 9,000

La Coruna 2 (Turu Flores 41, Djalminha pen 85)
Tenerife 0 Att: 27,000

Valladolid 0 Real Sociedad 0 Att: 17,000

Villarreal 0 Oviedo 0 Att: 5,000

Saturday, March 20

Espanyol 1 (Tamudo 20)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Urzaiz 90) Att: 12,200

Sunday, March 21

Alaves 2 (Desio 53, Gerard 63)
Atletico Madrid 0 Att: 18,000

Celta Vigo 3 (Mazinho 36, Sanchez 61, Mostovoi 81)
Racing Santander 0 Att: 19,000

Mallorca 1 (Ibagaza 90)
La Coruna 2 (Marcelinho og 20, Ziani 53) Att: 15,000

Oviedo 0 Valladolid 0 Att: 12,528

Real Madrid 2 (Raul 29, Juanito og 52)
Extremadura 0 Att: 70,000

Real Sociedad 0
Barcelona 2 (Cocu 28, 86) Att: 32,000

Salamanca 1 (Loren 49)
Betis Sevilla 3 (Galvez 1, Ayala 76, Alexis pen 88) Att: 12,000

Tenerife 2 (Makaay 40, Llorente 76)
Villarreal 2 (Roberto 60, Alfaro pen 89) Att: 19,000

Valencia 1 (A Ilie 48)
Zaragoza 1 (Gustavo Lopez 18) Att: 45,000

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	27	16	5	6	59	30	53
Celta	27	13	9	5	52	27	48
Valencia	27	14	5	8	42	27	47
La Coruna	27	13	8	6	39	28	47
Real Madrid	27	14	4	9	54	42	46
Mallorca	27	13	6	8	29	21	45
Athletic Bilbao	27	12	6	9	33	34	42
Real Sociedad	27	10	8	9	34	32	38
Zaragoza	27	10	7	10	38	37	37
Oviedo	27	9	10	8	32	35	37
Betis Sevilla	27	10	7	10	28	34	37
Valladolid	27	9	7	11	27	30	34
Atletico Madrid	27	9	6	12	40	35	33
Espanyol	27	7	12	8	28	32	33
Racing Santander	27	8	8	11	34	38	32
Villarreal	27	7	10	10	33	39	31
Alaves	27	7	6	14	24	38	27
Tenerife	27	4	12	11	25	40	24
Extremadura	27	6	6	15	17	43	24
Salamanca	27	6	4	17	22	48	22

SPANISH CUP – QTR-FINALS

Feb 23: Real Madrid 1 Racing Santander 0
Real Madrid won 7-2 on agg.
Feb 24: Espanyol 1 Atletico Madrid 4
Atletico won 6-2 on agg;
La Coruna 1 Mallorca 0 *La Coruna won 2-1 on agg;*
Valencia 4 Barcelona 3 *Valencia won 7-5 on agg.*

SWITZERLAND

Sunday, February 28

Lucerne 0
Basle 2 (Goncalves 33, Frick 89) Att: 7,930

Servette 2 (Vurens 72, Durix 79)
Lausanne 0 Att: 8,452

Zurich 0
St Gallen 2 (Contini 31, Jairo 58) Att: 5,400

Wednesday, March 3

Neuchatel Xamax 1 (Isabella 30)
Grasshopper 1 (De Napoli 57) Att: 5,700

Sunday, March 7

Basle 1 (Goncalves 36)
Neuchatel Xamax 0 Att: 4,250

Grasshopper 4 (De Napoli 16, 22, Smiljanic 79, Magnin 86)
Lucerne 0 Att: 3,800

Lausanne 3 (Thurre 49, Mazzoni 87, 90)
Zurich 1 (Bartlett 88) Att: 4,590

St Gallen 2 (Contini 31, 34)
Servette 0 Att: 7,400

Sunday, March 14

Servette 2 (Wolf 34, Rey 38)
Basle 1 (Fabinho 71) Att: 6,567

Lucerne 0
Lausanne 1 (Thurre 62) Att: 4,800

Neuchatel Xamax 3 (Isabella 16, Molist 25, N'Diaye 38)
St Gallen 2 (Contini 47, Hellinga 52) Att: 5,400

Zurich 0
Grasshopper 1 (Comisetti 58) Att: 10,450

Saturday, March 20

Lausanne 4 (Pantelic 14, Celestini 16, Mazzoni 63, Diago 71)
Neuchatel Xamax 0 Att: 4,800

St Gallen 0 Lucerne 2 (Vukic 56, Knez 61) Att: 6,200

Sunday, March 21

Basle 1 (Perez pen 5)
Zurich 0 Att: 7,500

Grasshopper 0 Servette 1 (Rey 53) Att: 10,800

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Servette	4	3	0	1	5	3	31
Lausanne	4	3	0	1	8	3	28
Grasshopper	4	2	1	1	6	2	26
Basle	4	3	0	1	5	2	23
St Gallen	4	2	0	2	6	5	20
Neuchatel Xamax	4	1	1	2	4	8	20
Zurich	4	0	0	4	1	7	19
Lucerne	4	1	0	3	2	7	17

TURKEY

Feb 26: Kocaelispor 0 Sakaryaspor 1.
Feb 27: Istanbulspor 0 Trabzonspor 0; Bursaspor 1 Besiktas 2.
Feb 28: Gaziantepspor 1 Antalyaspor 1; Altay 5 Ankaragucu 1; Adanaspor 3 Dardanelspor 0; Erzurum 0 Galatasaray 1; Genclerbirligi 3 Samsunspor 0; Karabukspor 0 Fenerbahce 0.
Mar 5: Trabzonspor 3 Erzurum 1.
Mar 6: Sakaryaspor 3 Istanbulspor 0; Besiktas 0 Kocaelispor 3; Dardanelspor 0 Gaziantepspor 1; Ankaragucu 2 Bursaspor 2.
Mar 7: Antalyaspor 4 Altay 2; Samsunspor 2 Adanaspor 0; Karabukspor 1 Genclerbirligi 6; Galatasaray 2 Fenerbahce 0.
Mar 12: Bursaspor 1 Antalyaspor 0.
Mar 13: Fenerbahce 1 Trabzonspor 0.
Mar 14: Istanbulspor 0 Besiktas 2; Altay 0 Gaziantepspor 0; Erzurum 4 Sakaryaspor 2; Adanaspor 2 Karabukspor 0; Kocaelispor 0 Ankaragucu 1; Samsunspor 2 Dardanelspor 1; Genclerbirligi 1 Galatasaray 2.
Mar 19: Galatasaray 1 Adanaspor 1.
Mar 20: Sakaryaspor 2 Fenerbahce 1; Trabzonspor 4 Genclerbirligi 0; Ankaragucu 5 Istanbulspor 0; Gaziantepspor 5 Bursaspor 2; Karabukspor 0 Samsunspor 3.
Mar 21: Dardanelspor 4 Altay 1; Antalyaspor 2 Kocaelispor 1; Besiktas 2 Erzurumspor 1.

TURKEY – TOP 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Galatasaray	25	17	6	2	65	25	57
Besiktas	25	16	6	3	42	22	54
Fenerbahce	25	16	4	5	59	18	52
Trabzonspor	25	14	5	6	37	25	47
Kocaelispor	25	12	4	9	31	25	40
Antalyaspor	25	11	5	9	34	32	38

UKRAINE

Mar 7: Metalurh D 0 Shakhtar 4; Metalurh Z 0 Vorskla 1; Prykarpattya 1 Zirka 0; Kryvbas 2 Dnipro 1; Tavriya 1 Nyva 0; Mykolaiv 0 Metalist 2; Metalurh M 4 Karpaty 2.
Mar 11: Dynamo 2 Metalurh M 0.
Mar 13: Zirka 1 Metalurh Z 0; Dnipro 0 Prykarpattya 0; Shakhtar 1 Kryvbas 1; Nyva 3 Metalurh D 2; Metalist 1 Tavriya 0; Karpaty 5 Mykolaiv 1; Vorskla 1 CSKA 0.
Mar 21: Kryvbas 2 Nyva 1; Metalurh D 0 Metalist 0; Tavriya 1 Karpaty 1.

UKRAINE – TOP 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dynamo	16	12	3	1	47	12	39
Shakhtar	17	12	1	4	50	16	37
Kryvbas	18	9	7	2	22	10	34
Karpaty	18	9	6	3	32	19	33
Metalist	18	8	2	8	18	24	26
Metalurh M	17	7	4	6	22	17	25

YUGOSLAVIA

Feb 26: Vojvodina 8 Radnicki K 1.
Feb 27: Obilic 5 Buducnost 0; Milicionar 4 OFK 0; Partizan 3 Pristina 0; Rad 1 Spartak 0; Zemun 2 Mogren 0; Hajduk Kula 2 Radnicki N 0; Proleter 2 Zeleznik 2; Sartid 1 Red Star 1.
Mar 3: Buducnost 0 Sartid 0; Red Star 1 Vojvodina 0; Radnicki K 0 Zemun 2; Mogren 0 Rad 2; Spartak 0 Proleter 1; Zeleznik 0 Partizan 2; Pristina 3 Hajduk Kula 1; Radnicki N 4 Milicionar 1; OFK 0 Obilic 1.
Mar 6: OFK 5 Buducnost 3; Obilic 5 Radnicki N 0; Milicionar 2 Pristina 0; Hajduk Kula 1 Zeleznik 0; Partizan 5 Spartak 1; Proleter 2 Mogren 2; Rad 2 Radnicki K 1; Zemun 0 Red Star 3; Vojvodina 1 Sartid 0.
Mar 12: Pristina 0 Obilic 2.
Mar 13: Buducnost 1 Vojvodina 0; Sartid 3 Zemun 0; Red Star 3 Rad 1; Radnicki K 2 Proleter 0; Mogren 0 Partizan 3; Spartak 2 Hajduk Kula 0; Zeleznik 1 Milicionar 1; Radnicki N 0 OFK 0.
Mar 17: Radnicki N 1 Buducnost 0; OFK 3 Pristina 2; Obilic 2 Zeleznik 0; Milicionar 2 Spartak 1; Hajduk 1 Mogren 0; Partizan 2 Radnicki K 0; Proleter 2 Red Star 1; Rad 1 Sartid 1; Zemun 0 Vojvodina 2.
Mar 20: Buducnost 1 Zemun 0; Vojvodina 1 Rad 1; Sartid 2 Proleter 1; Red Star 2 Partizan 2; Radnicki K 1 Hajduk 0; Mogren 1 Milicionar 0; Spartak 0 Obilic 4; Zeleznik 2 OFK 1; Pristina 1 Radnicki N 1.

YUGOSLAVIA – TOP 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Partizan	24	21	3	0	59	11	66
Obilic	24	20	4	0	61	9	64
Red Star	24	15	6	3	54	18	51
Vojvodina	24	13	3	8	45	22	42
Rad	24	11	7	6	26	26	40
Proleter	24	10	5	9	29	29	35

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

FIRST ROUND

Top three from each group qualify for second round, to which defending champions Vasco da Gama have a bye.

Group 1

Games played between Feb 23 and Mar 18
Estudiantes (Ven) 2 (Raices 52, Moran 59)
Monterrey (Mex) 1 (Zwaricks 29)

Nacional (Uru) 1 (Jorgeao 24)
Bella Vista (Uru) 0

Monterrey 1 (Naelson 9)
Bella Vista 1 (Pumar 55)

Estudiantes 2 (Paez pen 8, Moran 37)
Bella Vista 1 (Giacomazzi 69)

Monterrey 1 (C Torres 91)
Nacional 2 (R Sosa 24, G Alvez 90)

Estudiantes 3 (L Vallenilla 13, R Moran 56, J Vera 73)
Nacional 1 (Jorgeao 7)

Monterrey 4 (S Perez 7, A Thomson 11, A Mohamed 18, E Hernandez 59)
Estudiantes 0

Nacional 1 (G Alvez 43) **Bella Vista 0**

GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nacional (Uru)	4	3	0	1	5	4	9
Estudiantes (Ven)	4	3	0	1	7	7	9
Monterrey (Mex)	4	1	1	2	7	5	4
Bella Vista (Urug)	4	0	1	3	2	5	1

Group 2

Games played between Feb 24 and Mar 17
Velez Sarsfield (Arg) 1 (Cardozo 1)
River Plate (Arg) 1 (Saviola 42)

Deportivo Cali (Col) 1 (Zapata 29)
Once Caldas (Col) 0

Once Caldas 4 (Padilla 12, Congo 23, 89, Galvan 74)
River Plate 1 (Astrada 67)

Deportivo Cali 1 (Zapata pen 26)
River Plate 0

Once Caldas 0 Velez Sarsfield 0

Deportivo Cali 1 (M Zapata pen 55)
Velez Sarsfield 0

Once Caldas 3 (Galvan pens 19, 88, A Valentierra pen 63)
Deportivo Cali 0

River Plate 1 (Pizzi 21)
Velez Sarsfield 1 (Morigi 25)

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dep Cali (Col)	4	3	0	1	3	3	9
Once Caldas (Col)	4	2	1	1	7	2	7
Velez S (Arg)	4	0	3	1	2	3	3
River Plate (Arg)	4	0	2	2	3	7	2

Group 3

Games played between Feb 24 and Mar 17
Cerro Porteno (Par) 4 (Gauchinho 22, Alvarenga 35, 50, E Fernandez 87)
Olimpia (Par) 3 (Sante Cruz 58, Franco 85, Paredes 89)

Palmeiras (Bra) 1 (Arce 58)
Corinthians (Bra) 0

Cerro Porteno 2 (Alvarenga pen 14, Campos 76)
Palmeiras 5 (Junior Baiano 33, 70, Cleber 52, Evair 68, Oseas 88)

Olimpia 4 (C Paredes 50, M Paredes 57, Perez 69, Avalos 85)
Palmeiras 2 (Junior Baiano 46, 88)

Corinthians 8 (Edilson 5, Fernando Baiano 9, 13, 16, 45, 88, Indio 33, Silvinho 53)
Cerro Porteno 2 (Caballero pen 36, Toledo 85)

Palmeiras 1 (Paulo Nunes 58)
Olimpia 1 (Dezotti 87)

Corinthians 2 (Marcelinho Carioca 53, Fernando Baiano 80)
Palmeiras 1 (Paulo Nunes 90)

Olimpia 2 (Paredes 30, Perez 67)
Cerro Porteno 2 (Toledo 18, Aceval pen 25)

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Palmeiras (Bra)	5	2	1	2	10	9	7
Corinthians (Bra)	3	2	0	1	10	4	6
Olimpia (Par)	4	1	2	1	10	9	5
Cerro Porteno (Par)	4	1	1	2	10	18	4

Group 4

Games played between Feb 24 and Mar 17
Universitario (Per) 2 (Coria 5, 29)
Sporting Cristal (Per) 1 (A Gonzalez 80)

Colo Colo (Chl) 1 (Montecinos 42)
Universidad Catolica (Chl) 0

Universidad Catolica 1 (Pizarro 4)
Sporting Cristal 1 (Fereira 5)

Universitario 2 (Cornelio 36, 80)
Colo Colo 0

Universidad Catolica 1 (Varges 47)
Universitario 0

Sporting Cristal 1 (Salazar 61)
Colo Colo 1 (Montesinos 66)

Sporting Cristal 2 (Olcese 19, Ferreyra pen 85)
Universitario 2 (Guadelupe 33, Coria 64)

Universidad Catolica 3 (Figueroa 5, Carracedo 25, Tapia 90)
Colo Colo 1 (Cordoba 2)

GROUP 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Universitario (Per)	4	2	1	1	6	4	7
U Catolica (Chl)	4	2	1	1	5	3	7
Colo Colo (Chl)	4	1	1	2	3	6	4
Sport Cristal (Per)	4	0	3	1	5	6	3

Group 5

Games played between Feb 24 and Mar 17
Blooming (Bol) 0 Jorge Wilstermann (Bol) 0

LDU (Ecu) 4 Emelec (Ecu) 1

Emelec 3 (Moreira 11, A Fernandez 49, Candelario 57)
Jorge Wilstermann 2 (Zamora 73, Sergio Joao 89)

LDU 3 (Perez 31, Rojas 39, De la Cruz 90)
Jorge Wilstermann 1 (Reinoso 72)

Emelec 1 (Fernandez 12) **Blooming 0**

LDU 1 (De la Cruz 68) **Blooming 0**

Emelec 2 (Juarez 60, 73) **LDU 0**

Jorge Wilstermann 1 (Loayza 90)
Blooming 0

GROUP 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
LDU (Ecu)	4	3	0	1	8	4	9
Emelec (Ecu)	4	3	0	1	7	6	9
Wilstermann (Bol)	4	1	1	2	4	6	4
Blooming (Bol)	4	0	1	3	0	3	1

ARGENTINA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

March 5-8

Platense 1 (A Godoy 69)
San Lorenzo 2 (Saric 41, H Nunez 83)

Belgrano 3 (Enria, Rueda, Luis Fernando)
Independiente 3 (J L Calderon 2 (1 pen), C Gomez)

Gimnasia LP 0
Union Santa Fe 5 (Castillo 33, 41, Mendoza 37, N Fernandez 44, Domizi 55)

Velez Sarsfield 0 River Plate 1 (Berizzo 61)

Huracan 0 Lanus 2 (Kmet 46, Belloso 65)

Newell's OB 4 (Crosa 8, Real 20, 46, Saldana 53)
Rosario Central 1 (I Moreno 44)

Gimnasia J 0
Argentinos Juniors 2 (C Moreno 59, Cartes pen 75)

Boca Juniors 3 (Palermo 12, 63, Barros Schelotto 89)
Ferro Carril Oeste 0

Colon Santa Fe 1 (Muller 45) **Estudiantes 0**

March 12-14

Talleres Cordoba 3 (Garay 76, Oliva 83, Zelaya 86)
Platense 2 (Godoy 43, M Herrera 70)

San Lorenzo 3 (Romeo 13, 88, Estevez 79)
Colon Santa Fe 1 (Saralegui 5)

Estudiantes 3 (Yagua 16, 47, A Peralta 28)
Velez Sarsfield 1 (Pandolfi 88)

Union Santa Fe 2 (D Montenegro 11, 39)
Huracan 2 (Cebrol pen 25, pen 85)

BOLIVIA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Feb 21: Bolivar 1 The Strongest 0; Jorge Wilstermann 2 Union Central 2; Bamin Real 3 Santa Cruz 1; Destroyers 1 San Jose 0; Guabira 0 Blooming 0; Oriente 4 Independiente 0.
Feb 27-28: Bolivar 1 Bamin Real 1; Independiente 4 Guabira 1; Union Central 2 Oriente 1; San Jose 1 The Strongest 0; Blooming 4 Destroyers 1; Santa Cruz 3 Jorge Wilstermann 0.
Mar 7: Bamin Real 2 San Jose 0; Independiente 1 Union Central 1; Destroyers 1 Guabira 1.
Mar 13-14: Bamin Real 4 Guabira 0; Union Central 0 Bolivar 2; The Strongest 2 Destroyers 0; Santa Cruz 1 Independiente 0.
Mar 21: Guabira 3 Jorge Wilstermann 2; Bolivar 6 Santa Cruz 0; Blooming 1 Oriente 0; Independiente 3 The Strongest 1; San Jose 2 Union Central 1.

BRAZIL

RIO-SAO PAULO TOURNAMENT

GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Santos	6	3	1	2	13	8	10
Vasco da Gama	6	3	1	2	12	9	10
Fluminense	6	3	0	3	12	10	9
Palmeiras	6	2	0	4	7	17	6

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sao Paulo	6	4	1	1	8	4	13
Botafogo	6	2	2	2	15	12	8
Flamengo	6	2	2	2	10	7	8
Corinthians	6	1	1	4	6	16	4

Semi-finals

Sunday, February 21

Vasco 2 (Juninho pen 52pen, Luizao 60)
Sao Paulo 3 (Serginho 8, pen 46, Dodo 41)

Santos 1 (Marcos Assuncao 51)
Botafogo 0

Wednesday, February 24

Botafogo 0 Santos 2 (Alessandro 9, Viola 39)

Sao Paulo 1 (Warley 56)
Vasco 3 (Odvan 7, Vagner 76, Guilherme 80)

Final

Sunday, February 28

Vasco 3 (Mauro Galvao 16, Juninho 66, Zezinho 71)
Santos 1 (Alessandro 20)

Wednesday, March 3

Santos 1 (Alessandro 46)
Vasco 2 (Ze Maria 45, Juninho 74)
Vasco won 5-2 on agg.

SAO PAULO CHAMPIONSHIP – FIRST PHASE

GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Portuguesa	10	7	1	2	20	10	22
Barbarense	10	5	3	2	20	10	18
Rio Branco	10	5	1	4	19	13	16
Inter Limeira	10	3	2	5	10	17	11
Sao Jose	10	2	5	3	7	13	11
Ituano	10	1	2	7	8	21	5

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mogi Mirim	10	5	3	2	20	14	18
Matonense	10	5	1	4	21	23	16
Guarani	10	4	4	2	19	12	16
Portuguesa Sant	10	4	1	5	16	19	13
Aracatuba	10	3	3	4	18	19	12
Uniao Sao Joao	10	2	2	6	17	24	8

Top four in each group qualified for second phase, to join the four automatic qualifiers.

SECOND PHASE

Saturday, March 6

Sao Paulo 2 (Warley 34, Dodo 85)
Guarani 2 (Gilson Batata 40, 44)

Sunday, March 7

Portuguesa 3 (Evandro 5, Alexandre 32, Leandro 56)
Portuguesa Santista 1 (Claudio Miller 38)

Palmeiras 1 (Junior Baiano 72)
Santos 1 (Alessandro 39)

Inter Limeira 3 (Auecione 74, Marcao 80, Paquito 86)
Mogi Mirim 1 (Samuel 46)

Rio Branco 3 (Caio Junior 5, Augusto 15, Joao Marcelo 27)
Barbarense 1 (Beto 65)

Saturday, March 13

Santos 1 (Claudiomiro 84)
Matonense 1 (Pia 5)

Sunday, March 14

Corinthians 0
Sao Paulo 3 (Marcelinho 16, 73, Serginho pen 88)

Barbarense 0
Palmeiras 1 (Alex pen 48)

Mogi Mirim 0
Portuguesa 1 (Leandro 27)

Guarani 1 (Gilson Batata 19)
Inter Limeira 2 (Sinval 11, Wilson Goiano 76)

Portuguesa Santista 2 (Claudinho 7, Cure 14)
Rio Branco 2 (Odair 45, Pena 50)

Saturday, March 20

Portuguesa 1 (Leandro 10)
Santos 2 (Jorginho 6, Marcos Assuncao 34)

Sunday, March 21

Corinthians 3 (Gamarra 15, Ricardinho 25, Fernando Baiano 85)
Rio Branco 0

Palmeiras 2 (Oseas 20, Paulo Nunes 33)
Guarani 1 (Gilson Batata pen 11)

Sao Paulo 5 (Franca 59, 75, Serginho 64, Marcelinho 67, Dodo 87)
Portuguesa Santista 1 (Claudio Miller 66)

Barbarense 1 (Bira 54)
Inter Limeira 1 (Paquito 81)

Mogi Mirim 2 (Alex 31, Ronaldo 57)
Matonense 4 (Tailson 79, 90, Marcio Pereira 86, Jean 90)

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sao Paulo	3	2	1	0	10	3	7
Inter Limeira	3	2	1	0	6	3	7
Palmeiras	3	2	1	0	4	2	7
Portuguesa	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Matonense	3	1	1	1	7	7	4
Rio Branco	3	1	1	1	5	6	4

GROUP 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Corinthians	3	2	0	1	7	5	6
Santos	3	1	2	0	4	3	5
Guarani	3	0	1	2	4	6	1
Barbarense	3	0	1	2	2	5	1
Portuguesa Sant	3	0	1	2	4	10	1
Mogi Mirim	3	0	0	3	3	8	0

Teams play once against the sides in the other group and twice against teams in their own group. Top two in each group qualify for the semi-finals. First stage groups were named 1 and 2; second stage groups are named 3 and 4.

CARIOCA (RIO) CHAMPIONSHIP – PRELIMINARY STAGE

INTERIOR GROUP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Itaperuna	8	5	2	1	11	5	17
Volta Redonda	8	5	1	2	10	5	16
Cabofriense	8	3	2	3	10	10	11

CAPITAL GROUP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olaria	8	3	3	2	11	6	12
America	8	0	0	8	0	16	0

Teams played each other twice, regardless of group. Group winners qualified for first stage, together with last year's top eight.

FIRST STAGE

Saturday, March 6

Vasco 4 (Luizao 7, Paulo Miranda 37, Juninho 78, Zezinho 90)
Bangu 0

Sunday, March 7

Olaria 2 (Deninho 2, Darcy 17)
Flamengo 3 (Leandro 30, 48, Iranildo 85)

Madureira 0
Friburgense 1 (Reginaldo Pinguim 70)

Americano 1 (Edson Souza 90)
Fluminense 5 (Jorge Luiz 9, Alexandre Lopes 13, Tulio 20, Roni 22, Marcelinho Paulista 82)

Botafogo 2 (Pontes 82, Rodrigo 84)
Itaperuna 1 (Marcelo Lima 38)

Saturday, March 13

Fluminense 2 (Nonato 46, Roni 69)
Madureira 1 (Da Silva 38)

Sunday, March 14

Bangu 0
Flamengo 2 (Romario 53, Caio 79)

Botafogo 0
Friburgense 1 (Nevada 84)

Itaperuna 1 (Fabio Figo 42)
Vasco 4 (Guilherme 35, Juninho 45, Zezinho 46, 59)

Olaria 1 (Luciano 67)
Americano 0

Saturday, March 20

Flamengo 3 (Romario 44, 64, 88)
Itaperuna 0

Sunday, March 21

Fluminense 0
Vasco 3 (Luizao 28, 61, Felipe 79)

Friburgense 2 (Marquinhos 12, Nevada 85)
Bangu 2 (Marcao pen 25, 66)

Madureira 1 (Marcelo Carioca 78)
Olaria 2 (Luciano 10, Darci 69)

Americano 3 (Washington 13, 87, Moura 31)
Botafogo 1 (Bebeto 17)

CHILE

Feb 27: Dep Iquique 1 Colo Colo 1; Audax Italiano 1 Huachipato 1; Dep La Serena 2 Puerto Montt 2; Dep Concepcion 2 Palestino 0.
Feb 28: U Catolica 2 O'Higgins 1; U de Chile 2 Cobreloa 1; Cobresal 4 Coquimbo Unido 0; Rangers 0 Santiago Morning 1.
Mar 6: Cobreloa 3 Cobresal 1; Coquimbo Unido 1 Dep Concepcion 0; Puerto Montt 3 Dep Iquique 0; Santiago Morning 1 Audax Italiano 0; Palestino 4 O'Higgins 2.
Mar 7: Rangers 1 U Catolica 6; Colo Colo 5 U de Chile 2; Huachipato 2 Dep La Serena 2.
Mar 15: Dep La Serena 2 Santiago Morning 3; Cobresal 2 Colo Colo 2; O'Higgins 3 Coquimbo Unido 1; Dep Iquique 1 Huachipato 3; U de Chile 3 Puerto Montt 0; Audax Italiano 2 Rangers 2; Dep Concepcion 1 Cobreloa 1; U Catolica 1 Palestino 2.
Mar 21: Santiago Morning 0 Iquique 0; Audax Italiano 1 U Catolica 1; Rangers 1 Dep La Serena 1; Huachipato 1 U de Chile 1; Cobresal 1 Puerto Montt 0; Colo Colo 1 Dep Concepcion 0; Palestino 5 Coquimbo Unido 1; Cobreloa 6 O'Higgins 0.

COLOMBIA

Feb 25: Deportivo Pasto 1 Atletico Junior 1.
Feb 28: America 4 Tulua 0; Quindio 1 Deportivo Cali 2; Envigado 0 Nacional 1; Independiente Medellin 1 Once Caldas 0; Atletico Junior 3 Bucaramanga 2; Deportivo Pasto 6 Union Santa Marta 1; Tolima 1 Santa Fe 1; Millonarios 1 Atletico Huila 0.
Mar 7: America 3 Deportivo Cali 0; Once Caldas 2 Envigado 1; Atletico Huila 1 Tolima 0; Santa Fe 2 Millonarios 0; Quindio 0 Cortulua 2; Atletico Junior 2 Union Santa Marta 0; Bucaramanga 1 Deportivo Pasto 0.
Mar 14: Union Santa Marta 3 Bucaramanga 3; Deportivo Pasto 4 Atletico Junior 2; Cortulua 3 Deportivo Cali 2; America 3 Quindio 0; Atletico Huila 1 Santa Fe 0; Nacional 1 Once Caldas 0; Millonarios 2 Tolima 2; Independiente Medellin 0 Envigado 0.
Mar 21: Cortulua 1 America 1; Once Caldas 3 Envigado 1; Millonarios 1 Santa Fe 1; Quindio 4 Deportivo Cali 2; Nacional 1 Union Santa Marta 1; Atletico Junior 2 Independiente Medellin 1; Bucaramanga 0 Tolima 0; Atletico Huila 2 Deportivo Pasto 2.

ECUADOR

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 5-8: Emelec 1 Audaz Octubrino 0; Deportivo Cuenca 3 Espoli 2; Aucas 3 Olmedo 1; Macara 0 El Nacional 0; Deportivo Quito 1 LDU 2; Delfin 1 Barcelona 3.
Mar 14: LDU 4 Delfin 0; Audaz Octubrino 1 Deportivo Quito 2; Espoli 2 Macara 0; El Nacional 2 Aucas 1; Olmedo 2 Emelec 0; Deportivo Cuenca 0 Barcelona 1.
Mar 21: Emelec 1 El Nacional 1; Aucas 0 Espoli 1; Deportivo Cuenca 1 LDU 0; Delfin 3 Audaz Octubrino 1.

PARAGUAY

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Feb 28: Sportivo Luqueno 2 Cerro Porteno 2; San Lorenzo 3 Resistencia 0; Colegiales 2 Olimpia 5; Cerro Cora 4 Presidente Hayes 2; Sol de America 0 12 de Octubre 0.
Mar 7: Sol de America 4 Cerro Cora 1; Cerro Porteno 4 Presidente Hayes 2; 12 de Octubre 4 Resistencia 0; Guarani 0 San Lorenzo 3.
Mar 14: Colegiales 2 Sol de America 1; San Lorenzo 1 12 de Octubre 1; Cerro Cora 1 Guarani 3; Olimpia 0 Presidente Hayes 0; Cerro Porteno 2 Resistencia 1.

PERU

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Feb 21: Union Minas 1 Alianza Lima 2.
Feb 27: Union Minas 4 Alianza Atletico 0; Sporting Cristal 2 Deportivo Municipal 0.
Feb 28: Deportivo Pesquero 2 Juan Aurich 2; IMI Talara 4 Cienciano 1; Sport Boys 0 Alianza Lima 1; Melgar 3 Universitario 2.
Mar 6: Deportivo Municipal 3 Melgar 2; Sporting Cristal 2 Alianza Lima 2.
Mar 7: Alianza Atletico 2 Sport Boys 2; Juan Aurich 2 Union Minas 2; Cienciano 3 Deportivo Pesquero 0; Universitario 3 IMI Talara 0.
Mar 14: Sport Boys 2 Juan Aurich 1; Deportivo Pesquero 1 Universitario 1; Union Minas 0 Cienciano 1; Sporting Cristal 4 Alianza Atletico 1; Melgar 1 Alianza Lima 2; IMI Talara 2 Deportivo Municipal 0.
Mar 21: Sporting Cristal 6 IMI Talara 1; Universitario 2 Cienciano 1; Union Minas 1 Sport Boys 1; Melgar 3 Deportivo Pesquero 0; Juan Aurich 1 Alianza Lima 1; Alianza Atletico 1 Deportivo Municipal 1.

URUGUAY

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 6-7: Huracan Buceo 0 Nacional 5; Rentistas 0 Penarol 2; Paysandu 1 Danubio 7; River Plate 0 Rampla 0; Cerro 2 Defensor 5; Liverpool 0 Tacuarembo 0.
Mar 14-15: Penarol 1 Frontera Rivera 1; Danubio 6 Rampla 1; Defensor 2 Tacuarembo 1; Huracan Buceo 0 Bella Vista 0; Cerro 2 Liverpool 1; Paysandu 1 River Plate 3; Dep Maldonado 1 Rentistas 3.
Mar 20-21: Nacional 4 Tacuarembo 0; Dep Maldonado 1 Paysandu 1; Penarol 2 Rampla 1; Danubio 2 Frontera Rivera 2; Huracan Buceo 0 Liverpool 0; River Plate 0 Rentistas 0.

VENEZUELA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Feb 21: Nacional 2 Caracas FC 0; Italchacao 0 Univ los Andes 2; Estudiantes 3 Mineros Guyana 3; Inter Lara 0 Carabobo 1; Nueva Cadiz 3 Union Tachira 3.
Feb 28: Union Tachira 1 Estudiantes 1; Univ los Andes 2 Inter Lara 1; Mineros Guyana 1 Italchacao 1; Carabobo 1 Nacional 1; Caracas FC 3 Nueva Cadiz 0.
Mar 7: Italchacao 3 Union Tachira 0; Carabobo 2 Caracas FC 1; Nacional 2 Univ los Andes 1; Inter Lara 1 Mineros Guyana 0; Estudiantes 1 Nueva Cadiz 0.
Mar 14: Univ los Andes 1 Carabobo 0; Nueva Cadiz 2 Italchacao 2; Union Tachira 2 Inter Lara 1; Mineros Guyana 0 Nacional 0.

CONCACAF

MEXICO

Preliminary round

Feb 25: Cruz Azul 3 Atlante 2.
Feb 27: UAG 1 Atlas 2; Toluca 2 UNAM 0; Tigres 2 Monterrey 0; Necaxa 1 Neza 1.
Feb 28: Guadalajara 1 Morelia 2; Pachuca 1 America 2; Atlante 1 Puebla 1; Santos 3 Cruz Azul 1; Leon 2 Celaya 3.
Mar 6: Cruz Azul 3 Tigres 2; Puebla 1 Santos 2; Atlas 0 Atlante 0; Monterrey 4 Necaxa 1; Celaya 2 UAG 1.
Mar 7: America 0 Guadalajara 1; Neza 2 Pachuca 3; UNAM 0 Leon 1; Morelia 0 Toluca 0.
Mar 12: Atlante 1 Celaya 4.
Mar 14: Pachuca 2 Monterrey 2.
Mar 16: Tigres 3 Puebla 0; UAG 2 Leon 1.
Mar 17: Toluca 3 America 0; Morelia 1 UNAM 2; Santos 2 Atlas 1; Necaxa 1 Cruz Azul 1; Guadalajara 1 Neza 1.
Mar 20: Monterrey 2 Guadalajara 4; Cruz Azul 2 Pachuca 1; Puebla 0 Necaxa 2; Celaya 3 Santos 0; Atlas 1 Tigres 0.
Mar 21: UNAM 0 UAG 2; Leon 3 Atlante 2; America 2 Morelia 1; Neza 1 Toluca 6.

GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cruz Azul	10	5	3	2	17	16	18
Atletico Celaya	10	5	2	3	19	14	17
Guadalajara	10	4	3	3	14	13	15
Leon	10	3	1	6	12	18	10
Puebla	10	2	2	6	11	20	8

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
America	10	6	2	2	16	12	20
Atletico Morelia	10	4	1	5	14	15	13
Pachuca	10	2	4	4	14	17	10
Toros Neza	10	2	4	4	13	19	10
Pumas UNAM	10	2	3	5	10	18	8

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Necaxa	10	3	4	3	16	13	13
Tecos UAG	10	4	0	6	12	15	12
Monterrey	10	3	1	6	18	22	10
Atlante	10	1	4	5	17	22	7

GROUP 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Toluca	10	8	2	0	28	10	26
Atlas	10	6	2	2	17	8	20
Santos Laguna	10	6	1	3	19	16	19
Tigres	10	4	1	5	23	22	13

USA

Mar 20: Tampa 2 DC United 5; Miami Fusion 2 MetroStars 3; Dallas Burn 4 Kansas City 0; San Jose 1 Chicago Fire 3; Los Angeles 1 Colorado Rapids 1
Los Angles won on shoot-outs.

AFRICA

NATIONS CUP QUALIFIERS

Group 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cameroon	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Mozambique	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Eritrea	2	0	1	1	1	3	1

Ghana's results expunged. They now qualify automatically as co-hosts

Group 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morocco	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Togo	2	1	0	1	4	3	3
Guinea	2	0	1	1	1	3	1

Sierra Leone expelled from competition – results expunged

Group 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Congo	3	2	1	0	2	0	7
Ivory Coast	3	2	0	1	4	1	6
Mali	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Namibia	2	0	0	2	0	4	0

Group 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Africa	3	2	1	0	6	2	7
Mauritius	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Angola	3	1	0	2	3	4	3
Gabon	3	1	0	2	4	7	3

Group 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Burkina Faso	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Burundi	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Senegal	2	0	1	1	1	2	1

Nigeria's results expunged. They now qualify automatically as co-hosts

Group 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zambia	3	2	1	0	4	2	7
Madagascar	3	1	1	1	5	4	4
DR Congo	3	1	1	1	4	5	4
Kenya	3	0	1	2	2	4	1

Group 7

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tunisia	3	3	0	0	9	1	9
Liberia	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
Uganda	3	1	0	2	2	9	3
Algeria	3	0	1	2	2	4	1

The top two teams in Groups 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7, and the winners of Groups 1 and 5 qualify for the finals next year. The runners-up in Groups 1 and 5 go into a play-off group with Zimbabwe, from which the top team will qualify. Egypt qualify automatically as holders; Ghana and Nigeria qualify automatically as co-hosts.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

PRELIMINARY ROUND – 1ST LEG

Real Banjul (Gam) 0 Kaloum Stars (Gui) 2

FIRST ROUND – 1ST LEGS

Mar 12-14: Maji Maji (Tan) 0 Al Ahly (Egy) 3; Rayon Sport (Rwa) 2 AFC Leopards (Ken) 1; ASC Ndiambour (Sen) 1 Raja Casablanca (Mor) 0; Djoliba (Mli) 2 Cotonsport (Cam) 0; FC105 Libreville (Gab) 1 ASEC Abidjan (IvC) 0; USFA Yennega (BuF) 2 USM El Harrach (Alg) 0; SC Villa (Uga) 5 EELPA (Eth) 0; Costa do Sol (Moz) 0 DC Motema Pembe (DRC) 1; Telecom Wanderers (Mwi) 1 Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf) 2; SS Saint-Louisienne (Reu) 1 DSA (Mad) 0; Al Mahala (Lby) 1 Esperance (Tun) 2; Nchanga Rangers (Zam) 1 Al Hilal (Sud) 0; Vital'O (Brd) 2 Primiero Agosto (Ang) 1; RL Defence Force (Les) 0 Dynamos (Zim) 3; Ela Nguema (EqG) 0 Hearts of Oak (Gha) 3.

CUP-WINNERS CUP

FIRST ROUND – 1ST LEGS

March 12-14: WA Tlemcen (Alg) 1 Al Shaat (Lby) 2; AS Mineurs (Gui) 1 LPRC Oilers (Lbr) 0; Royal Armed Forces (Mor) 2 ASC Yeggo (Sen) 0; Wikki Tourists (Nig) 4 Renaissance (Chd) 0; Africa Sports (IvC) 2 Stade Malien (Mli) 0; Simba FC (Uga) 2 Tanzania Stars (Tan) 1; Dynamo Douala (Cam) 3 Anges Fatima (CAR) 0; Club Africain (Tun) 3 AS Fonctionnaires (BuF) 0; Power Dynamos (Zam) 6 Saint Michel (Sey) 1; Matare (Ken) 2 Bata Bullets (Mwi) 0; Petro Atletico (Ang) 2 AS Dragons (DRC) 0; Maxaquene (Moz) 2 Marsouins (Reu) 1; Orlando Pirates (SAf) 6 Defence Force XI (Bot) 0; Al Masry (Egy) 1 Al Merreikh (Sud) 0; Asante Kotoko (Gha) 2 Ndzimba (Gab) 0.

CONFEDERATION OF AFRICAN FOOTBALL CUP

FIRST ROUND – 1ST LEGS

March 12-14: US Medina (Alg) 2 Horoya (Gui) 1; Al Ahli (Sud) 1 Insurance (Eth) 0; Canon Yaounde (Cam) 2 APR FC (Rwa) 0; Mumias Sugar (Ken) 1 Ferroviario Beira (Moz) 1; Stade Tamponnaise (Reu) 5 ASFTM (Mad) 1; Accra Great Olympics (Gha) 3 Etoile Filante (BuF) 2; Wydad Casablanca (Mor) 1 Al Ahli Benghazi (Lby) 1; Diaraf Dakar (Sen) 1 FC Man (IvC) 0; Kwara United (Nig) 1 Young Africans (Tan) 0; Saneamento Rangol (Ang) 3 Police XI (Bot) 2; Etoile Sahel (Tun) 3 Centre Salif Keita (Mli) 0; Medlaw Megbu (Eth) 1 Express Red Eagles (Uga) 0; Vita Club (DRC) 7 Desportivo Mongomo (EqG) 0; Nkana FC (Zam) 2 Royal Leopards (Swa) 2.

ASIA

CHAMPIONS CUP

QTR-FINALS – WEST ASIA ZONE

In Al Ain, UAE

Thursday, February 25

Al Ain 6 (Hamad 5, 80, Shila 14, 41, Abedi Pele 55, Saeed 8)
Kopetdag 1 (Bairamov 20)

Al Hilal 1 (Abdullah 47)
Esteghlal 2 (Majidi 13, Dinmohammadi 40)

Saturday, February 27

Al Ain 0
Esteghlal 1 (Akbapour 70)

Al Hilal 4 (Litana 17, Al Temiyat 21, Al Dossary 41, Al Jaber pen 62)
Kopetdag 2 (Kuldjaqazov 14, Bairamov 31)

Monday, March 1

Al Ain 1 (Harib 68)
Al Hilal 0

Esteghlal 0
Kopetdag 1 (Khalikov 72)

FINAL TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ain (UAE)	3	2	0	1	7	2	6
Esteghlal (Iran)	3	2	0	1	3	2	6
Al Hilal (SAr)	3	1	0	2	5	5	3
Kopetdag (Tkm)	3	1	0	2	4	10	3

Al Ain and Esteghlal qualified for the semi-finals

SEMI-FINALS DRAW

Al Ain (UAE) v Jubilo Iwata (Jap);
Dalian Wanda (Chn) v Esteghlal (Irn)
Ties to be played on April 28

CUP-WINNERS CUP

QUARTER-FINALS

Feb 27: Sarawak (Mly) 2 Kashima Antlers 4 (Jap).
Feb 28: Happy Valley (HK) 0 Chunnam Dragons (SKo) 3.

Mar 3: Kashima Antlers 10 Sarawak 0
Kashima Antlers won 14-2 on agg.
Mar 6: Chunnam Dragons 4 Happy Valley 1
Chunnam Dragons won 7-1 on agg.

SEMI-FINALS DRAW

Talaba (Irq) v Al Ittihad (Sau);
Kashima Antlers (Jap) v Chunnam Dragons (SKo)
Ties to be played on April 16

JAPAN

J.LEAGUE

Mar 6: Nagoya Grampus Eight 1 Avispa Fukuoka 0; Urawa Reds 2 Gamba Osaka 1; Cerezo Osaka 2 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1; Kashima Antlers 4 JEF United Ichihara 0; Yokohama F Marinos 2 Bellmare Hiratsuka 0; Shimizu S-Pulse 3 Verdy Kawasaki 1; Jubilo Iwata 3 Vissel Kobe 1; Kashiwa Reysol 1 Kyoto Purple Sanga 0.
Mar 13: Gamba Osaka 3 Nagoya Grampus Eight 2 (aet); Verdy Kawasaki 2 Cerezo Osaka 0; Kyoto Purple Sanga 1 Yokohama F Marinos 3; Vissel Kobe 1 Kashima Antlers 2; Avispa Fukuoka 1 Kashiwa Reysol 4; Bellmare Hiratsuka 0 Shimizu S-Pulse 1; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 0 Jubilo Iwata 1; JEF United Ichihara 0 Urawa Reds 0 (aet).

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Feb 27: Kashima Antlers 2 Shimizu S-Pulse 1.

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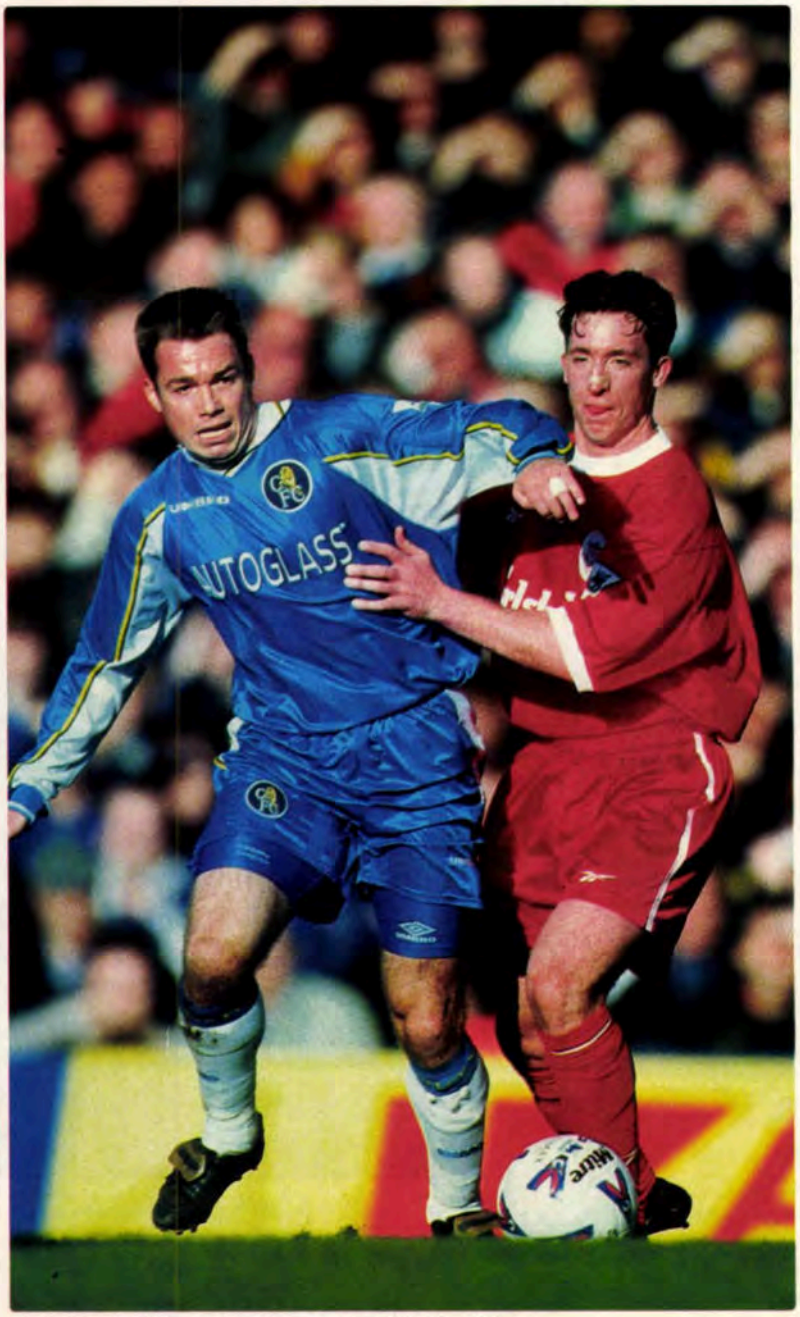
Brian Glanville's LAST WORD

Referee Durkin should have intervened in the horrid affair between Le Saux and Fowler

Red rags and referee wrongs



Contact sport...Le Saux and Fowler get to grips at Stamford Bridge

THE Robbie Fowler and Graeme Le Saux affair was horrid indeed, but could not its ultimate consequences have been avoided? Specifically by the referee, Paul Durkin.

That Durkin did not see Le Saux's foolish, reckless and expensive retaliation on Fowler, when he struck him with an elbow, off the ball, in the back of the neck, is wholly explicable. Referees do not have eyes in the back of their heads, and must rely on their linesmen to notice such offences. Apparently the linesman did not see it, either, though of course television did.

But it was the preamble to it all that is so puzzling. Fowler's provocation of Le Saux was repugnant: sticking out his backside to imply that the Chelsea player is homosexual, for which there is no evidence. Though perhaps it is an unbearable provocation for one like Fowler to know that a fellow pro does such appalling things as collecting antiques and going to galleries.

Did Durkin not see this, either? Did not either of his linesmen? Perhaps he felt grateful for small mercies, because in the past Fowler has been known to bare his backside to the crowd, rather than merely protrude it. Adding insult to injury, however, Durkin not only ignored Fowler's provocation but actually booked an outraged Le Saux, for supposedly wasting time before taking the free-kick.

So each player was similarly punished; though in the circumstances it seems to me that a red card for Fowler's red rag would have been fully justified.

Fowler is beyond doubt a talented player and indeed I was one of the first to salute him, after a dazzling early performance for Liverpool in the League Cup against Fulham. But his record is not an endearing one, not least when he goes abroad to play.

There was the episode on an Under-21 tour when a lamp was smashed in a hotel room occupied by Trevor Sinclair, who, though quite guiltless, was obliged to pay the penalty. Then there was the incident at a foreign airport when Fowler was chastised by Neil Ruddock, whose training shoes he had kicked to pieces.

Le Saux should take to heart that useful old maxim 'never retaliate', but to say that he was, in another old phrase, provoked beyond endurance seems legitimate. His letter of apology to Fowler rang true. Fowler's grudging response seemed quite unauthentic and clearly had been written by somebody else.

But could not Durkin have nipped the whole nasty business in the bud?

Ted out, head in

YES, I confess. In my book *Football Memories* I somehow missed the fact that the word 'head' had been omitted, making it look as if Italy's old mentor, Vittorio Pozzo, stuck his teddy bear round the bedroom door of previously feuding players! Lest the error pass into legend – one review already has alluded to it – let me set the record straight now!

Mix-up...a teddy bear

...Vittorio Pozzo

Cheap jibes...Alex Ferguson on the San Siro touchline for Manchester United's game against Inter

Ferguson, crass and crude

WE MAY perhaps write off all the harsh things Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson said about Italian clubs cheating the referee as what the Italians call *pre-tatti ca:* otherwise a form of psychological warfare.

In the event, ironically, United were manifestly favoured by a brave French referee in San Siro, a stadium where so many teams have been cheated at this semi-final stage in the past.

Inter claimed two penalties, and Peter Schmeichel's first-half dive across Ivan Zamorano probably would have brought a spot-kick from most referees. But unlike the notorious Tasamic and Ortiz de Mendibil in the 60s, Gilles Veissiere, courageous to a fault, defied the pressure of Internazionale's players and a febrile crowd. But there is no evidence that Inter, as a club, behaved anything but correctly, whatever their past trespasses.

That Ferguson should go beyond football to make cheap jibes about Italians at large, saying that in Italian restaurants he would always poke around his plate to make sure he was not being short changed, was gratuitous and vulgar.

Few people have a better right than I to impugn the past excesses of Italian clubs in general and Internazionale especially, in the Angelo Moratti-Italo Allodi-Dezso Solti days in particular. After all, Keith Botsford and I spent years on the *Sunday Times* in exposing the Golden Fix, as we named it.

Later, Internazionale conned their way to a replay in the European Cup against Borussia Monchengladbach when Boninsegna was hit on the back of the head by an empty Coca-Cola can, and Mazzola, by his own later admission, handed a full one to the referee.

Later still, they made a crude attempt after a UEFA Cup defeat in Holland to bribe the manager of Groningen, Berger, and his club, only to be let off the hook – as Juventus were after the Lobo-Solti affair of 1973 – by a disgracefully permissive UEFA. And there was the incident of that youth tournament in South America which Inter won by dint of forging the identity of an over-age player.

All of which explains why I found the glowing, grovelling eulogy inscribed beneath the bust of Angelo Moratti at La Pinetina, Inter's training ground, pretty hard to stomach. It is another indication of the *commendatore* syndrome, the depressing Italian habit of deferring to the top man, whoever he may be, whether Moratti or Andreotti.

But as Keith Botsford and I stressed at the time of our revelations, we are both strongly pro-Italian and Italian football. I lived in Italy for years, my older daughter has taught in Rome for 14 years, her twin played as a 17-year-old with Formia. Botsford's mother was Italian.

We have earned the right to criticise what we find distressing in Italian life. Ferguson should have known better than to go beyond football and be so crass and crude.

Does he like it when the same kind of thing is said, as crassly and crudely, about Scotsmen?

Penalty?...Schmeichel's clash with Zamorano

The gallop to stop Yallop

WHAT A SURPRISE! "Twenty leading figures in world football" have been accused of getting paid to influence last summer's vote for the FIFA presidency – even if Sepp Blatter himself has categorically denied the slur.

Roll the clock back to 1974 and Frankfurt, and what do we find? In the pungent words of my old *Sunday Times* co-investigator, Keith Botsford, "small brown envelopes going into large black hands".

There was no investigation back then. Blatter sees no reason for one now; how can he investigate himself, he asks. UEFA president Lennart Johansson has also said that he does not want an investigation. But it did at the time seem unusual, to put it mildly, that a vote which seemed copper-bottomed in favour of Johansson, not least because the Africans had seemingly promised their backing en bloc, suddenly turned out to be 111 to 80 in favour of Blatter.

Things may have changed just a little since Havelange beat Rous in 1974. For the next 24 years this egregious old man dominated FIFA, reduced its delegates to a bunch of servile sycophants, and survived each and every accusation of fixing and corruption.

The Teflon President you might have called him, but he could never have got away with it – the award of the 1986 World Cup to Mexico, the disgraceful snubbing of Pele at the Las Vegas World Cup draw in 1993 – had the FIFA representatives not been such a bunch of invertebrate time-servers.

Blatter has tried desperately to get a ban on the controversial book by David Yallop, in which the allegations appear, and at the time of writing, craven British publishers have failed to issue it. But it has appeared in several other countries.

We now hear that a mysterious figure from the Middle East was responsible for distributing the cash. Why? What had he to gain? What return was he hoping or paying for?

Yallop, who spoke to me a few times about his initial intention to write a biography of Havelange, is an unusual figure. He sold vast numbers of his sensational book *In The Name Of God*, which alleged that a Pope had been poisoned.

Meanwhile, an inquiry does seem mandatory.

There has been a certain stiffening of backbones in FIFA in recent years. The delegates even stood up to the old Brazilian bully after their congress in 1994 when they refused to endorse the lists of committee members he had presented to them as a *fait accompli.*

Blatter and his wretched ideas remain a menace to the game. The biennial World Cup; the synchronised calendar, which seems as crudely uneven in its effects as the single currency and its unified interest rates; the redundant world championship for clubs. And, though Blatter did not invent it, I have every sympathy with those English clubs who did not want to release their younger players for the Under-20 tournament in Nigeria.

I've never believed in international competitions which expose young players to such pressures so early. And their clubs surely have some rights.

Come the revolution...the day when the major clubs of Europe simply rebel cannot be so far away. Blatter blown away? An enticing prospect.

May 1980

DIEGO MARADONA, at 19, was preparing for his first visit to Wembley when the photograph that appeared on the cover of the May 1980 issue was taken. He is in the front row of the Argentina team, while immediately behind him, sporting the bubble-cut, is Alberto Tarantini, who later had a short and sorry spell with Birmingham City.

That Wembley game, a 3-1 defeat for the then world champions, kicked off a three-match European tour. Daniel Passarella scored for Argentina, from a penalty, while Liverpool's David Johnson scored two for England and Kevin Keegan got the other.

World Soccer's Leslie Vernon ran the rule over England's 22 for the European Championship to be played in Italy in June. Only Keegan and centre-back Dave Watson were said to be irreplaceable, but there was a lot of other talent mentioned, too – such as Peter Shilton, Ray Clemence, Bryan Robson, Glenn Hoddle and Trevor Francis.

England had qualified in style, with seven wins and a draw from eight games. Vernon wrote that "credit must be given to the first-class management of Ron Greenwood and his faithful lieutenants", and the general tone of his article led the headline-writer to put up the one reproduced here.

Unfortunately, by the time the tournament took place, England seemed to have lost that balance. They drew 1-1 with Belgium, lost to a late Tardelli goal against Italy, and despite a 2-1 win over Spain in their final group game finished only third out of four.

Elsewhere in the issue there was a lengthy investigation into a match-fixing scandal in Italy, which eventually led to the suspension of international forward Paolo Rossi.

Eric Weil paid tribute to Olimpia, who had won the Libertadores Cup, the Inter-Continental Cup and the Inter-American Cup, as well as retaining the Paraguayan title, and Eric Batty wrote at length about Czechoslovakia and their manager, Jozef Venglos, now in charge at Celtic.

Back on the English game, there was an article about the likely arrival of managing directors at clubs. Paid, of course...

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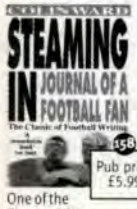

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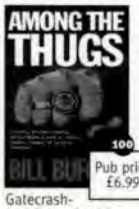

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